Ethical Leadership Self-Assessment Tool

About this self-assessment tool

This self-assessment tool is designed to be used in conjunction with the ethical leadership video and primer, *Ethical Leadership: Fostering an Ethical Environment & Culture.* The tool will help you identify areas in which you're successfully modeling behaviors that foster an ethical environment and culture, as well as highlight opportunities for improvement. It's designed for leaders at the senior executive and mid-manager (division/department/service line manager) levels as defined in VA's High Performance Development Model (HPDM). For more information about the competencies for each level, please see the "Competency Definitions" (http://vaww.va.gov/hpdm/pdf/corecompetencydefinitions.pdf).

How to use the tool

This tool will challenge you to think about your own leadership behaviors. Each question suggests a behavior or skill you may wish to develop. Each leader's situation is unique—think about your local situation and whether increasing your use of the behavior or skill could improve your leadership practice and thereby your local ethical environment. *There are no right or wrong answers.* For this reason, no mechanism is provided to enable you to calculate an overall score or compare your responses to those of other leaders.

After you complete the tool

Immediately following the self-assessment questions, you'll find an action plan. Use it to identify opportunities to improve your leadership practice and local ethical environment and culture.

Ethical Leadership Self-Assessment

Please check one answer for each of the following items:

I. Demonstrate that ethics is a priority	**Almost Never**	**Occasionally**	**Frequently**	**Almost Always**
I tell my staff to make ethics a priority.				
I use examples or stories from my facility or my experience to illustrate the importance of ethics.				
I initiate discussions of ethical concerns.				
In a typical day, I think about ethical issues.				
I demonstrate that I am sensitive to ethical issues in my everyday work.				
I object when someone seems to be ignoring, avoiding, or smoothing over an important ethical issue.				

Section I–continued	Almost Never	Occasionally	Frequently	Almost Always
I explicitly acknowledge staff contributions to promoting ethical practice.				
I include specific expectations for ethical practice in staff performance plans.				
I hold my staff accountable for meeting high ethical standards.				
In conversations with staff, I invite comments about ethical concerns.				
When staff members raise an ethical concern, I thank them for sharing the concern.				
When staff members raise an ethical concern, I ask them to say more.				
I encourage discussion of conflicting values related to organizational decisions.				
I create opportunities for staff discussion of ethics topics.				

II. Communicate clear expectations for ethical practice	Almost Never	Occasionally	Frequently	Almost Always
I make a conscious effort to serve as a role model for ethical practice.				
I clearly communicate my expectations for ethical practice to my staff.				
When I communicate my expectations for ethical practice, I explain the values that underlie those expectations.				
When I communicate my expectations for ethical practice, I use examples that illustrate what I mean.				
When I communicate my expectations for ethical practice, I make sure those expectations are realistic and achievable.				
When I communicate my expectations for ethical practice, I make a point to address obstacles that staff might encounter.				
When staff members receive “mixed messages” that create ethical tensions, I take responsibility for clarifying my expectations for ethical practice.				
I encourage staff to talk to me if they feel pressured to “bend the rules.”				

III. Practice ethical decision making	Almost Never	Occasionally	Frequently	Almost Always
I explicitly consider ethical issues when making management decisions.				
I use a standardized process to make decisions on management issues with ethical implications.				
When faced with a tough decision, I look to VHA mission and values statements (or similar documents) and use them to evaluate various options.				
When faced with a tough decision, I think through the short-term and long-term effects on various individuals and groups.				
When faced with a tough decision, I make sure that I am not unfairly favoring a particular individual or group.				
When I need advice on an ethical issue, I go to a person with ethics expertise.				
When I need advice on an ethical issue, I refer to published sources				
When making important decisions, I involve those who will be most affected.				
When important decisions are made by a group, I ensure that someone is specifically tasked to call attention to ethical considerations.				
When I announce important decisions to staff, I take time to explain the decision-making process and who was involved.				
When I announce important decisions to staff, I take the time to explain the rationale for the decision.				

IV. Support your local ethics program	Almost Never	Occasionally	Frequently	Almost Always
I talk to staff in my facility about how the ethics program works, including:				
- ethics consultation				
- preventive ethics				
- ethical leadership				
- compliance and business integrity				
- research compliance and assurance				
- government ethics				
I receive and review updates about local ethics program activities.				
I seek help from the local ethics program.				
I act to ensure that local ethics activities are adequately funded.				
I act to ensure that local ethics activities are adequately staffed.				
I inform my staff about current local ethics program activities.				
I highlight successes in local ethics program activities for staff.				
I encourage my staff to use the local ethics program when they have an ethical concern.				

Action Plan

Once you have completed the self-assessment questions, complete this action plan to identify opportunities for improvement, taking into account your organizational role. To monitor your progress, repeat this exercise yearly to help you assess whether you have achieved your improvement objectives.

Steps:

1. Based on your responses, choose one action in each of the four points of the Ethical Leadership compass (section I, II, III, or IV) to focus on this year.
2. Within this area, identify several concrete steps you will take to demonstrate your ethical leadership and thereby improve your facility's ethical environment.

Example:

Ethical Leadership Compass III. Practice ethical decision making			
Ethical Leadership Action	**Current Frequency**	**Goal Frequency**	**Action Steps**
I explicitly consider ethical issues when making management decisions.	Almost Never	Frequently	• Change format for executive decision memorandum (EDM) to include reference to ethics (e.g., just as document references financial considerations, it should reference ethical considerations). • Ask myself "Are there ethical issues in this decision?" for at least three management decisions per week for which an EDM is not used.

Ethical Leadership Compass I. Demonstrate that ethics is a priority			
Ethical Leadership Action	**Current Frequency**	**Goal Frequency**	**Action Steps**

Ethical Leadership Compass II. Communicate clear expectations for ethical practice			
Ethical Leadership Action	**Current Frequency**	**Goal Frequency**	**Action Steps**

Ethical Leadership Compass III. Practice ethical decision making			
Ethical Leadership Action	**Current Frequency**	**Goal Frequency**	**Action Steps**

Ethical Leadership Compass IV. Support your local ethics program			
Ethical Leadership Action	**Current Frequency**	**Goal Frequency**	**Action Steps**