



**Covenant
Health**

*Compassionate care led
by Catholic values*

www.covenanthealth.ca



Mission Discernment Tool

A process for
making good
organizational
decisions



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*Do the commandments
of God, which are written
on the human heart
and are part of the
Covenant, really have
the capacity to clarify
the daily decisions
of individuals and
entire societies?*

John Paul II
Veritatis Splendor, 4, 1993



Covenant Health

A Discerning Culture

*“The mission,
vision and values
of Covenant Health
define our identity
as an organization,
and our culture
of a committed
team of physicians,
staff and volunteers.
They guide the
decisions,
behaviours and
attitudes for which
we are all
accountable.”*

**Covenant Health Mission
Integration Strategy**

Our Mission

We are called to continue the healing ministry of Jesus by serving with compassion, upholding the sacredness of life in all stages, and caring for the whole person—body, mind and soul.

Our Vision

Covenant Health will positively influence the health of Albertans and be of service to those in need by working together with compassion, quality and innovation.

Our Values

As a Catholic organization, we are committed to serving people of all faiths, cultures and circumstances, according to our values:

Compassion
Respect
Collaboration
Social Justice
Integrity
Stewardship

*“The heart of discernment
is listening to the voice
of the Spirit”*



Covenant Health Mission Discernment Tool

Our Commitment

We promise to create a culture that will allow our staff, physicians and volunteers to flourish, knowing we are making decisions and setting standards of behaviour that are directed solely to support those we serve.

This is Our Commitment to Ethical Integrity, and the hallmark of Covenant Health that we are proud of.

Purpose

Mission discernment is a process to help Covenant Health leaders make good decisions about major clinical, operational, and administrative issues, in alignment with our mission and values.

Some health care issues are complex and challenging, often leaving decision-makers without a clear path forward. As a leader, when you are facing such difficult decisions, you may benefit from a tool to choose the option that best reflects our mission and values, helping you to stand confidently behind your decision.

Decisions that significantly impact the lives of those we serve or affect our reputation as an organization, either positively or negatively, deserve careful consideration. In the absence of a clear process to guide you in weighing options against our mission and values, poor decisions can be made, sometimes at the risk of compromising your personal integrity. Mission discernment is a proactive or preventative ethics strategy to help you, as a Covenant Health leader, to make more consistently good decisions, with less risk of compromise.

Decision-making and discernment

Decision-making involves considering a preferred choice among competing options. That option may be both about the aim or goal that is sought, as well as the means in which the aim is achieved. Choosing one option over another is typically a preference for what is important, or valuable, to the decision-maker. No matter how simple or complex, each decision will be based on certain values.

Discernment is similar to decision-making because it is about making preferred choices. However, the intentional focus in *naming and being explicit about the values informing our choices* distinguishes discernment from decision-making. This values-based analysis is helpful to ensure alignment between what we say is important to us as an organization, with what we do.

Once named, the discernment process involves weighing or sifting the value choices (from the Latin root, *discernere* – “to sift or distinguish”) to make a practical and accurate judgment or decision about what we ought to do, and how we will achieve this end. In this way, the discernment process helps us make Covenant Health values explicit, and to then make consistent choices based on our values. Good discernment therefore leads to good decision-making.

A call to formation

Whereas discernment is a practical decision-making tool, it is also an instrument to strengthen leadership formation. In the midst of competing options and priorities in today’s complex Catholic health care environment, discernment helps leaders uphold the healing ministry of Jesus by ensuring our mission and values drive all our decisions. Employing discernment is an opportunity to reflect deeply on the fundamental reference points informing our work and how, in turn, our own calling and faith may be personally enriched.



Discernment also requires we examine how all our Covenant Health values inform our choices to ensure a balanced approach to decision-making. The healing ministry of Jesus is as much about courageous decision-making and fiscal responsibility as it is compassionate service and love.

A call to fidelity

Discernment is a disciplined practice to help us live our mission and values in all we do. We are called to fidelity to uphold Roman Catholic ethical and social teaching, the legacy of our founders, as well as our identity and reputation as a ministry of the Church through the example of Jesus Christ, in how we care for the sick, and how we treat one another. This is reflected in the very name of our organization, Covenant Health, which is our promise to one another and those we serve. In the midst of difficult choices, discernment helps us to listen carefully to both the voice of reason as well as the voice of conscience welling up in our hearts. Discernment calls us to be faithful to our inner experience.

Decision-making in today's health care environment is certainly not without its challenge. It is an awesome responsibility and difficult task. Yet the Mission Discernment Tool attests to our uncompromising belief that the Spirit of the Living God is always with us, guiding us in every decision we make.



When to Use Mission Discernment

Triggers

The Covenant Health Mission Discernment Tool can be used whenever you or your team faces a major clinical, operational or administrative issue that can positively or negatively impact the mission of the organization.

While the tool is not intended to be prescriptive, or to excuse you from exercising your own professional judgment and experience, there are certain issues that would normally signal a discernment is strongly recommended.

A simple colour coded matrix can prompt us to ask whether a particular issue warrants a formal discernment process:

When issues call us to...



Some trigger issues definitely require us to *stop* and take a sufficient time-out to weigh all the different aspects of the issue until mission due diligence is complete. In some cases, this may even cause us to abandon an initiative or reverse a decision.

Some issues raise questions of doubt and uncertainty that may make us *slow down* or proceed more cautiously before making a decision.



Some scenarios may benefit from a discernment process to support the communication or implementation of the decision when we generally already feel confident to *proceed*.

Below is a chart of potential triggers. This is not an exhaustive list, nor does every significant issue always require a full discernment process. For example, no matter how complex an issue, any proposed option that is illegal or contrary to the Health Ethics Guide should be sufficient grounds to decide against it.

Moreover, some decisions may not appear significant, but once you become engaged in the issue, you may realize there is value to have a formal process to ensure all perspectives are heard and to identify other options.

Triggers for Mission Discernment

It's time to take a sufficient time-out to weigh all the different aspects of the issue until mission due diligence is complete.

Let's pause to address questions of doubt and uncertainty that may make us proceed more cautiously before making or carrying through a decision.

Even when we feel confident, we may require some reflection to support the communication or implementation of the decision.

Potential Triggers when facing issues that...

- pose a legitimate and real risk to our reputation and those we serve
- risk harming others or the environment
- threaten our financial viability and survival
- conflict with the Health Ethics Guide and Catholic social teaching or risk scandal and litigation

- require a major commitment of human resource, financial or capital commitment for success
- require focused attention to ensure a balanced review of all possible options and stakeholders

- require assurance that an option is aligned with the mission and values
- require an ethical framework to better communicate the rationale for a difficult but quickly arrived at decision
- require sensitive and multiple communication strategies



Triggers for Mission Discernment Continued

Potential Triggers when facing issues that... Continued

- threaten our Catholic identity and relationship with the Church
 - involve opening or closing of major programs and services
 - contemplate mergers, acquisitions or major partnerships
 - require divesting of facilities or property
 - require our attention for unresolved, mission-critical issues
- involve recruitment and selection of key board, leadership and clinical positions who impact the reputation of the organization
 - require the investment of time to generate a solution or strategy that will add value to the people we serve
 - involve significant political, funder, donor or community pressures that conflict with our values
 - require a major review or refreshing of the mission, vision, values or strategic directions
- need to strengthen confidence and support for an already perceived opportunity
 - strengthen other due diligence or business case plans with a mission and values framework

Application and timing of mission discernment

This discernment tool is meant to be used to help identify and weigh options in light of the Covenant Health mission and values to ensure consistency in decision-making. The tool should ideally be used as part of a business case proposal, root cause analysis, financial planning or other form of due diligence based on the various triggers. Mission discernment should not be done separate and independent of these processes if at all possible, especially when its integration strengthens the analysis and decision-making outcome.

At minimum, the tool should complement the various decision-making processes, with the added benefit of ensuring



a balanced and consistent approach, and to help make our values explicit in arriving at, supporting, and communicating a decision.

The tool should also be employed at an appropriate time early in the process so as to inform the thinking behind the decision. Bringing it in at the end of a process only to ensure a mission “blessing” is not an appropriate use of the tool.

The tool can be adapted to use with everyday decisions without having to employ a formal mission discernment. The personal reflection questions, for example, can be useful to help you clarify your thinking, or uncover biases and assumptions that may impede good decision making, even about the simplest matters. Used in this informal way, the tool can still be a helpful check-list and resource for leadership formation.

The role of participants and facilitators

Each discernment process needs to be creatively tailored to the decision at hand. This will require an assessment of who needs to be involved in the process, and the best time and means to solicit their feedback to ensure a balanced and objective review. Consideration should be given to the appropriate number of representatives without becoming unnecessarily cumbersome. Participants invited to take part in the discernment process should freely voice their perspectives, with the assumption that everyone has wisdom to offer.

There is no one set method for facilitating discernment processes. Team culture, time pressures and meeting schedules should be respected in setting up the discernment exercise and engaging participants. As much as possible, the process should leverage other existing meeting structures to avoid duplication and ensure there is energy for the process. It can also serve as an education or formation experience for your team to help you grow, understand team dynamics and promote a discerning culture.



Discernment Pathway

A path for good decision-making

As with most tools, judgment and skill is required in how mission discernment will actually be employed in a specific situation. While it is convenient to list steps in a linear fashion, in reality one step may feed into another, or require circling back to previous steps as new information comes to light.

In this way, discernment is more a pathway than a prescribed formula. Discernment is ultimately rooted in a life of faith and a prayerful, loving openness to the truth (*caritas in veritate*). For many leaders, decision-making is an intuitive exercise that may not consciously follow a step-by-step methodology. However, having a shared discernment pathway is extremely helpful when facing complex issues and the potential for either positive or negative impact is significant. Having a place to start, and a common methodology to ensure we are not missing any key steps along the way can be a tremendous support for us as leaders. It is also helpful to have a shared process that we can use consistently, over time, to help deepen the discerning culture of the organization.



Discernment Pathway



1. Determine the **need**
2. Define the **issue(s)**
3. Acknowledge **reactions**
4. Clarify the **facts**
5. Identify **stakeholders**
6. Weigh options against **values**
7. Propose **alternatives**
8. Make a **decision**
9. Implement and **document**
10. Revisit and **review**

1. Determine the need for a mission discernment

The following questions will help you determine whether a particular issue calls for a mission discernment. This can take on the form of a discernment itself. Discernment is not the exclusive methodology for decision-making and you may be able to leverage other tools. As well, other practical issues need to be considered before proceeding.

- Do the triggers for discernment apply?
- What time, energy and consideration does this decision require?
- Is there another or simpler process that may better achieve the desired outcome?
- Has there been a previous related discernment that we can draw upon and benefit from its documented analyses?
- Does the Health Ethics Guide already provide authoritative direction to make this decision?



- Is the need for discernment more to help you come to a decision, to confirm a decision already made, or how best to communicate the decision?
- Does the discernment need to be done now, or at a later time?
- Is the sense of urgency of making this decision real or perceived? Is it artificially imposed? Can this decision be delayed?
- If you are presented with something you must do seemingly without any choice (i.e., a legislative requirement, deficit reduction, closing a program), is there still a role for discernment in how you will implement the changes?
- If the need for mission discernment exists, does the issue at hand require an internal or external facilitator to guide the process?

2. Define the issue(s)

Being clear about the question we are asking people to discern is essential to good decision-making. Any one issue may raise additional questions that may or may not be related to the issue at hand. Good discernment requires that we stay focused on the issue(s) that demand the most attention at the time.

- Are there multiple issues at play that require our attention, and if so, which is the most important issue to address?
- What secondary issue(s) can be tabled for later?
- Is there consensus about what the actual question for discernment is, and is this periodically revisited during the process?
- Whose issue is this? Is the issue the same for the organization, the funder, the patient/resident? Whose issue is most relevant for this particular discernment process?
- Does the question for discernment meet the trigger questions, or can a process other than mission discernment be employed?



- How much does history or personalities affect how participants view the issue, requiring further clarification before engaging in the discernment?
- Does dedicated time and space need to be carved out to give this issue the attention it deserves?
- Is it better to use prescriptive or more open-ended questions in facilitating this particular discernment?

3. Acknowledge intuitive and emotional reactions

Often our “gut” reactions towards issues are revealing, including the insight of prayer, dreams and moral imagination, and can inform our intellect and analytic reasoning. A balanced decision-making process engages all our senses.

- What do strong reactions around an issue reveal about its importance?
- In what way do our feelings, history, and experience help clarify subtleties around an issue?
- Is there emotional residue around a particular issue that distorts or gets in the way of good decision-making?
- What biases, loyalties, and conflicts of interest are operative that need to be acknowledged and managed?
- In what ways does our passion around certain choices help or hinder good decision-making?
- What does prayer reveal about this proposed decision?
- What insight or perspective does scripture offer?
- What does our individual conscience compel us to say or do?



4. Clarify the facts

Good decision-making is possible only if we have a grasp of the facts. Paying attention to what is undisputed fact versus assumption, hearsay or opinion is one of the most important “sift and sort” steps of discernment.

- Establish what we know about an issue, including key contextual background information.
- Establish what we do not know and what still needs to be ascertained before making a decision.
- What other information is relevant and available to help understand this issue (ie, legal, financial, clinical, legislative, ecclesial, social, historical)?
- What data is irrelevant and risks confusing or confounding the issue that should be set aside?
- What new evidence has come to light that may cause us to reverse or reconsider a proposed decision?
- How much information do we need to gather before we can confidently make a decision?
- Is our need for more information only serving to avoid making a decision?
- Are we tempted to back away from the facts now that they have been made known to us?

5. Identify stakeholders and various perspectives

Discernment seeks the wisdom of multiple stakeholder opinion and perspectives to ensure a balanced decision. This is especially important when there may be power differentials or resistance to seek input from certain sectors. Acknowledging those voices whose input disturbs us but nevertheless have something important to say will require openness and, sometimes, even moral courage.

- What are the various ways in which we can view this issue?



- Is the decision-making group free to name their own biases and internal power differentials?
- Are there some stakeholders who may be emotionally or psychologically unable to engage this issue freely that we must be sensitive to (i.e., a related traumatic experience with this issue)?
- What perspectives dominate group discussion? What perspectives are negated?
- Who do we still need to consult to ensure a balanced decision?
- What is our purpose for consulting others – to seek input, to debate or to inform?
- Who is accountable for this decision?
- Who will be the final arbiter/decision-maker of this decision?

6. Weigh the options against the values

Discernment helps make Covenant Health values explicit and accessible in our decision-making. While multiple values may be at play, it is important to know which of our six core values may be more relevant to a situation. Discernment often requires a balancing of values (i.e., compassion and stewardship). As a Catholic health care organization, our values are our fundamental reference points.

- What values underlie each possible option and are they consistent with our Covenant Health values?
- Is there a shared understanding of the meaning and implication of the values?
- What Covenant Health value(s) carry more weight among the discerned options, and is there capacity to publicly acknowledge this?
- In balancing competing values, is there consensus about what particular value(s) are most critical at this time?
- How do the discerned options align with our own personal values?



- Is there risk that the proposed option seriously conflicts with either our personal values or the values of the organization, triggering moral conflict or dissonance?
- How does the proposed option help us demonstrate the mission and values of Covenant Health?

7. Identify options and alternative courses of action

Discernment often surfaces new and previously unexplored options worthy of your team's consideration. In this way, mission discernment can help identify other possibilities and opportunities, and help advance our strategic priorities. Far from an academic exercise, discernment can compel a team to courageous action.

- What other possible courses of action exist, including the conscious decision of doing nothing?
- What option is most aligned with our mission, vision and values?
- What option best advances the Covenant Health Strategic Plan?
- What are the limiting factors or non-negotiables regarding this issue that must be respected and publicly defended?
- Is there resistance to pursue a discerned option simply because it is inconvenient or might hinder our ability to manage this issue?
- Is it tempting to back away from an option because of the financial, political, capital or human resource implications? Is this a legitimate limiting factor signalling further discernment is required?
- What other areas of resistance are we aware of and is there capacity to see a discerned course of action through to completion despite resistance?



8. Make a decision

Discernment ultimately requires that a decision be made. This in turn may trigger additional discernment about the timing and communication of the decision, as well as the resources required to see the decision through. In some cases, initiatives may need to be put on hold or reversed in order to satisfy the discerned option. The wisdom of praying and “sleeping on a decision” as a final check before rushing ahead can be extremely useful.

- At what point in the discernment conversation is the question more about the communication and implementation of the decision, versus coming to the decision itself?
- What feelings and energy are evoked among participants in going forward with this decision?
- Do we anticipate the decision may still cause unease with participants the next day/week/month, or in the face of possible criticism?
- Does the decision bring peace, consolation or hope after praying about it? Does it bring opposing feelings instead?
- Would you be able to stand by the decision at staff forums, with colleagues, in the media and when looking yourself in the mirror?
- Can you live with this decision, even if it is difficult, unpopular, or inexpedient, knowing it is the best choice given all the circumstances?
- Is there a contingency plan in case the decision does not bring about the intended outcomes or raises unanticipated hardship or harm?



9. Implement and document the decision

Once the discerned choice is made, it must be put into action. Closing the loop on decision-making and seeing discernment through to implementation is a critical next step. Practical logistical steps about who, when, and how the decision will be implemented and documented, and best communicated, underscores this part of the discernment pathway. Sometimes good decision-making goes awry in implementation and communication.

- Who will implement and document this decision, by what process, and within what timelines?
- What key messages need to be reflected in communication strategies?
- What kinds of venues are required for discussing the decision and answering staff and/or media inquiries?
- What process and criteria for measuring will be used to evaluate the decision and outcome?
- How will you articulate your accountability for the decision, including monitoring the impact of the decision based on the aims and values that factored in the discernment?
- What implementation milestones serve as potential decision-points for making adjustments or evoking contingency planning?
- Is this decision for a specified period of time or is it enduring?
- When would you know you are “done” with this issue?



10. Revisit and review learning

The discernment process is complete only when the decision is revisited and reviewed. Much as athletes routinely review film after the game has been played, organizational decision-making around major issues brings with it incredible learning opportunities about team functioning, the role of our values in driving decision-making, spin-off questions and issues tabled for future consideration.

- What are the conditions under which the decision or discernment process needs to be revisited?
- What is the broader relevance of this decision? What are the consequences or impact of the decision elsewhere in the health care system if it were to be applied consistently?
- What has this decision revealed about the operative values (versus the espoused values) of the organization?
- What went well and is worthy of repeating in future decision-making and implementation strategies? What didn't work well and should be avoided?
- What did you learn about our team process and our capacity for decision-making?
- What did you learn personally about yourself?
- What are you most proud of in this decision-making experience?
- What might carry lingering doubt or dissonance in how this decision was made, implemented or communicated?
- Finally, what "gift of the spirit" (for example, love, peace, patience, generosity, faithfulness, etc. See Galatians 5:22) might this decision leave you with?



Deepening a Discerning Culture

“As a Catholic organization, we hold six core values of critical importance that define who we are. These values should govern all our behaviour, attitudes, actions, and decisions. Our values are the means by which we operationalize or make tangible our mission in practical and everyday ways. They are the intersection between who we say we are as an organization, and what we do.”

Covenant Health Mission Integration Strategy

Values – our fundamental reference points

Mission discernment is as much an art as it is a disciplined process for making good decisions. Use of the tool around specific questions can have a spill over effect, helping you become more discerning when dealing with day-to-day issues.

The following sample of personal reflection questions, based on Covenant Health values, serves as a checklist to support both major and everyday decision-making. While many of these questions are intuitive, there are times when we are confronted by a major decision and the way forward is not so obvious, that taking time to intentionally explore some of these questions can serve as a moral barometer in how we really feel about the decision.



The questions are fluid and multi-layered, recognizing that our values are interdependent and frequently several or all are reflective in our choices. The questions simply help you become more aware of how your values, both personal and organizational, are affirmed or negated.

Periodic reflection on these questions around major issues can influence our mindful attention to everyday decision-making. In this way, the Mission Discernment Tool can support our desired goal for Covenant Health to become an ever deeper discerning culture.

Compassion

We will treat others as we would expect to be treated

- Are there potential emotional, historical or other competing interests that might preclude your free and transparent participation that you need to own, even to the point of giving yourself permission to step out of some decisions?
- What personal lessons have you learned from past decision-making experiences that continue to disturb you that may be relevant in how you approach, or not approach, this particular decision?
- Imagine yourself six months from now. Would you still feel good about this decision?
- If you knew what you know now about the impact of this decision, would you still make the same decision?
- Are you consoled or troubled by this decision?
- Will this decision keep you awake at night?
- Do you identify with those who may be impacted by this decision, and does that clarify or distort your decision-making?
- What grace do you seek to make this decision?



Collaboration

We will achieve more by working together than on our own

- Who do you need to support you in this decision?
- Do different learning styles, needs and personalities of those you are collaborating with need to be considered in making this decision?
- Who is best positioned to facilitate this process, and should the person come from within or outside the organization? Should you lead this process?
- Does the debriefing of the discernment process require an off-site location to allow you and others the space to engage the issue together without distractions?
- Does this require the entire group to discuss or can you, together with a small group, engage the process and report back to the large group?
- What specific sections of the Health Ethics Guide apply that help inform your understanding of the ethical dimensions of this decision?
- Who is ultimately accountable for this decision?
- Who might need to be the final arbiter of this decision if consensus is not reached? Can you courageously make this final decision?



Social Justice

We will work in partnership with others to build healthy and just communities and to promote human flourishing

- What barriers are you aware of that may influence the decision-making experience (i.e., time, political pressure, legislative requirements, funding)? Are these real or perceived barriers?
- What conflicts of interest do you or other participants bring to the decision-making that hinder free participation in the process? Can you own and manage these conflicts and still stay engaged in the process?
- Is this decision fair for all concerned? Do you feel it would be fair if it impacted you or your team?
- Is this decision life-giving? Will it positively promote our reputation in the community?
- Does this decision have an environmental impact, that you are comfortable with?
- Does this decision promote your own flourishing as a leader?

Stewardship

We will be good stewards of all our resources, to sustain our mission into the future

- Are there sufficient resources (capital, financial, human) to support your decision? Have you thoroughly consulted others in the organization to determine the long-term viability of the proposal?
- Does this capital expense require a formal discernment?
- When do you know you are finished with the discernment?
- Would you be prepared to rethink your perspective if the discernment process compelled you to another option that is more sustainable?



- How might you approach this issue similarly or differently in the future, so as to be better stewards of your own lived experience?
- Do you have the capacity to revisit this decision in the future if it needs to be changed? How personally attached are you to this decision and how that might hinder your honest assessment of the outcome?
- Is your investment of time engaging in this discernment proportionate with the associated risks or impact the decision may bring?

Respect

We will respect the dignity of every human being, from conception to natural death

- What have you learned about yourself in this process and do you respect yourself for the decision you made?
- Do you respect the diversity of opinion regarding this issue, and are you open to different cultural or religious perspectives that may need to be weighed?
- Do you have the cultural competency to understand the subtle nuances of this issue if certain populations may be impacted?
- What emotional space do you need to own and respect that can get in the way of objective decision-making around this particular issue, and at this particular time?
- Do you respect the limited amount of energy and time that you can devote to this issue before needing to move on?



Integrity

We will put into practice what we profess to be the right and ethical thing to do

- If you defended your decision later at a staff forum, and in the media or courtroom, would you still be comfortable with this decision?
- What is the purpose of communicating your decision? To inform others, to seek their input or approval, to justify and defend your decision, to clarify your own thinking, to put others at ease, to prepare others for the implications of your decision?
- Is the energy you put into the communication of your decision proportionate to your energy that went into the decision?
- Are you concerned that you may be hampered in your future leadership by this decision? That you may be overly-identified by this decision, for good or for bad?
- Do you sense this decision risks compromising your values or slides you toward an unacceptable outcome?
- How do you preserve your personal and professional integrity with this decision-making process?



Documentation and Review

Discernment has tremendous value in educating a group about its own biases, assumptions, and team functioning. We demonstrate good stewardship by building on our past learning. This will help us close the loop on decisions we made, and to actually bring them forward to action. We can also determine, as in step 1 of the Discernment Pathway, whether we actually require a discernment if we have captured the insights of previous related discernments.

However, some decisions are for a specific time and place. Leaders should not be narrowly confined to the precedent of a previous decision if new information comes to light or circumstances change. Good discernment can give us the freedom and confidence to reverse previous decisions if they no longer make sense.

Reviewing decisions has the three fold benefit of:

1. Providing an invaluable learning opportunity (i.e., as a case study)
2. Demonstrating our accountability to one another to ensure we have not missed anything along the way
3. Further means of supporting a discerning culture through critical self-reflection



Covenant Health

Mission Discernment Template

The following template provides an overview of the discernment process. It begins by asking you whether a decision requires a formal discernment analysis, and if so, guiding you through the subsequent pathway steps. This can also streamline reporting and documentation, demonstrate accountability to our strategic directions, and witness how we *live our mission and values in all we do*.

An electronic template is available at www.covenanthealth.ca/about-us/missiondiscernment.html

As a means of creating a repository of discernments, enabling shared learning, flagging trends and ensuring ongoing quality improvement, please send a copy of your completed template to Vice President, Mission, Ethics and Spirituality, at mes@covenanthealth.ca

Elements of the mission discernment tool can be easily adapted to assist with clarifying options around routine decisions where a formal discernment is not required. While it is up to you to complete and submit the template, it can serve as a helpful worksheet to assist leaders with making everyday decisions where some degree of reflection is desirable.

For mentoring and coaching in how to use mission discernment, or to arrange facilitation support in leading a process or for training, please call the Vice President, Mission, Ethics and Spirituality at: 780.735.9597.

Covenant Health

Mission Discernment Template

Discernment Pathway



1. Determine the **need**
2. Define the **issue(s)**
3. Acknowledge **reactions**
4. Clarify the **facts**
5. Identify **stakeholders**
6. Weigh options against **values**
7. Propose **alternatives**
8. Make a **decision**
9. Implement and **document**
10. Revisit and **review**

Outline the decision that needs to be made, providing background and context (two to three paragraphs)

1. Is a discernment required? Yes No

Please refer to the colour coded trigger matrix in the user's guide. Review related discernments or other operational business cases that may apply.

Colour status

1 Call us to stop *Red*

1 Call us to slow down *Yellow*

1 Call us to proceed with confidence *Green*

Other related discernments, analyses or briefing notes that provide a perspective on this issue:

2. What is the issue or issues before the group?

Key issue:

Secondary issue(s):

Relationship between issues:

3. Acknowledge reactions and intuitive input:

What strong reactions, either positive or negative, need to be acknowledged?

Are there any identified conflicts of interest that need to be owned and managed?

4. What are the key facts?

What do we know about this issue?

What do we still need to ascertain?

What remains merely rumour or perception?

5. Who do we need to be consulting on this issue?

Who are the identified stakeholders?

What significant information was identified among key stakeholders?

What specific articles of the Health Ethics Guide apply, if any?

Who is ultimately accountable for this decision?

6. Identify options and weigh against Covenant Health values:

Options:

Compassion

Collaboration

Stewardship

Social Justice

Respect

Integrity

What value(s) tends to weighted more in this decision?
Please briefly explain:

Is there a value that trumps all?

7. Explore other alternative courses of action

Have we missed anything?

What questions remain?

8. Make a decision

State clearly what the decision is, and any other relevant background information not already noted.

9. Implement and document

Implementation plan:

Communication plan:

Contingency plan, if any:

10. Review and revisit

Is there a review required? By when? By whom?

Any additional key learning identified?

Addendum notes and date:

*Do not be conformed to
this world, but be
transformed by the
renewing of your minds,
so that you may discern
what is the will of God—
what is good and
acceptable and perfect.*

Romans 12:2



**Covenant
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