

Our Commitment to Ethical Integrity

Creating our Covenant Health Culture



Our promise

Our Commitment to Ethical Integrity is more than a code of conduct—it is a promise... 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.



**Covenant
Health**

*Compassionate care led
by Catholic values*

The Covenant Health Board's Expectations

Creating our Covenant Health culture begins with the Board of Directors policy outlining their commitment to ethical integrity. The Board's commitment is *our* commitment. The expectation of the Board as instituted in this statement applies to all who work, practice, or volunteer in Covenant Health facilities.

The commitment made by the Covenant Health Board in setting the highest standards of ethical conduct, and to abide by and model those standards in everything they do, belongs in turn to each of us.

Our Commitment to Ethical Integrity is our code of conduct—it is meant to set the standard and reinforce that as a member of the Covenant Health team, we are each accountable to uphold these standards of behaviour and create the ethical culture by which our organization will be widely known.

How We Ought to Act in Light of Who We Say We Are

Ethics permeates everything we do at Covenant Health—from our approach to serving patients and residents to how we make decisions about allocating resources. Our ethical tradition is rooted in Catholic values that shape how we interact with each person, respecting the rich diversity of cultures, faiths and traditions of those we serve, including those with whom we work. Within the context of ethics, the value of *integrity* is especially important because it compels us to align what we say is important with what we do.

As board, staff, physicians and volunteers it is our responsibility to demonstrate integrity in all our behaviours, attitudes and decisions—this is *Our Commitment to Ethical Integrity*.

Grounded in the *Health Ethics Guide*

Our promise to ethical integrity is grounded in the *Health Ethics Guide*. The *Guide* is published by the Catholic Health Alliance of Canada and is approved by the Canadian Council of Catholic Bishops. It is our primary resource for ethical discernment and decision-making. *Our Commitment to Ethical Integrity* is based on this work.

All clinical and administrative leaders are expected to inform their decision-making through critical reflection and application of the *Health Ethics Guide*, and to promote its use throughout the organization. We use it to help weigh our organizational values in light of the many complex governance, administrative, operational and clinical decisions we make.

It is in this way that we “*provide compassionate care, led by Catholic values.*”

Rooted in our Values

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

Compassion	Social Justice
Respect	Integrity
Collaboration	Stewardship

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 person—body, mind and soul.

Our vision

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

Compassion



At Covenant Health we are expected to:

- **Keep the people we serve at the centre of all we do**

We will evaluate the success of all our clinical, operational, strategic and governance decision-making to the degree it positively improves the health of others

- **Care for people at the beginning and end of life**

We will uphold and respect the intrinsic dignity of all persons, from conception to natural death

- **Weigh clinical benefits and burdens**

We will respect persons' free and informed decision to forgo or stop treatment when the burdens are disproportionate to the benefits hoped for or obtained

Respect



At Covenant Health we are expected to:

- **Treat people with respect**

We will conduct ourselves through respectful behaviour, speech, and attitude in all our interactions with others

- **Seek to resolve and diffuse conflict at the appropriate level**

We will work through conflict directly with one another in a respectful manner

- **Uphold confidentiality**

We will instill an environment of trust by safeguarding the privacy of personal information and upholding confidentiality, respecting all necessary legislative requirements

Collaboration



At Covenant Health we are expected to:

■ Cooperate with partners

We will live our value of collaboration by partnering with others to achieve the greatest good, including proactive steps to mediate and resolve conflict

■ Honour diversity

We will honour the different cultures, traditions, faiths and beliefs of those we serve and promote inclusive practices

■ Exercise conscientious objection

We will support those in good conscience who cannot participate in an activity deemed to be immoral or contrary to their professional codes of conduct, without abandoning those who may be impacted by such conscientious or professional decisions

Social Justice



At Covenant Health we are expected to:

■ Mitigate and manage conflict of interest

We will declare conflicts of interest and abide by legal, legislative and ethical conduct in all our business dealings as model corporate citizens

■ Promote environmental stewardship

We will support recycling, energy conservation and other green initiatives

■ Work towards just social policy

We will pursue alternate sources of revenues and engage in ethical hiring practices that promote social justice

Integrity



At Covenant Health we are expected to:

■ **Resolve complaints**

We will resolve complaints and address quality, safety and patient/resident issues to improve our performance

■ **Disclose adverse events**

We will promote a culture of discovery, learning and continuous quality improvement

■ **Mitigate incidents of moral residue**

We will support our staff in discerning ethical options in major decision-making to honour and preserve personal integrity

Stewardship



At Covenant Health we are expected to:

■ **Make responsible resource allocation choices**

We will guide our resource allocation decisions by the mission, values and strategic directions of the organization

■ **Promote an ethical culture**

We will ensure resources are available to promote sound decision-making by all persons in the organization

■ **Create a mechanism for raising concerns of unethical behaviour**

We will respond to legitimate concerns regarding systemic practices that negatively impacts the mission, values and reputation of the organization

Everyone has a role to play

Each person in the organization makes ethical decisions every day. Therefore, every person has a role in shaping the ethical culture, or character, of the organization. *Our Commitment to Ethical Integrity* calls us to promote ethical behaviour and to resolve ethical conflict with people directly and respectfully. Just as we recognize most clinical ethical issues are resolved at the bedside, so are other issues of ethical conflict in the organization resolved closest to the level in which it occurs. This is known as the principle of *subsidiarity*.

When we can work out conflict directly with people without unnecessarily escalating it to another level, we instill greater ownership in creating our desired ethical culture. While sometimes outside expert opinion is required to clarify what constitutes an ethically defensible course of action, subsidiarity affirms that we are all moral agents, and can positively influence the ethical culture of our organization through our behaviour, attitudes and decisions.

This grass-roots, non-escalating approach to permeating ethics throughout the organization is supported through education resources, mentorship and internal processes.

Our promise

Our Commitment to Ethical Integrity is more than a code of conduct—it is a promise. The Catholic health care tradition is built on a rich legacy of upholding the highest clinical standards to ensure patients and residents are at the centre of everything we do. We promise to create a culture that will allow our board, 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.

“Finally, beloved, whatever is true,
whatever is honourable,
whatever is just,
whatever is pure,
whatever is pleasing,
whatever is commendable,
if there is any excellence
and if there is anything worthy of praise,
think about these things”

Philippians 4:8

Resources

Several resources are available to support discussions on ethics, the Covenant Health values and the ethical decision-making process:

Health Ethics Guide

The current *Health Ethics Guide* is available on-line at:
http://www.chac.ca/resources/ethics/ethicsguide_e.php

Ethics at Covenant Health

This brochure, which identifies steps in ethical decision-making, is available on-line at
<http://www.covenanthealth.ca/about-us/mission-vision-values/ethics.html>

Values as Organizational DNA

This 8-minute DVD outlines our six Covenant Health values, providing examples and descriptions of each. Copies of the video are available or you can access it on-line at:
<http://covenanthealth.ca/about-us/mission-vision-values.html>

Mission Discernment Tool

The Covenant Health Mission Discernment Tool, including a working template is available on-line at:
<http://covenanthealth.ca/about-us/missiondiscernment.html>

As well, a number of training and educational resources are available to further enhance and instill Covenant Health mission, values and ethical traditions into our operational processes:

- Covenant Health Leadership Programs (CLP)
- Facility performance targets that advance our mission (Mission Assessment)
- Performance evaluations and action plans
- Patient relations mediators and disclosure coaches
- Root cause analyses
- Ethical decision-making frameworks
- Quality assurance committee discussions
- Internal audit and financial reviews
- Clinical and organizational ethics teams and consultants

If you would like copies of these resources or would like to hold an education session with your team on our code of conduct, please contact Mission, Ethics and Spirituality by e-mail at mes@covenanthealth.ca or by phone at (780) 735-9597.