Standard operating procedure (SOP) · GOV-SOP-002 · Version 1.1 · Approved by the ASF Expert Committee

Supports: 2A.9

At a glance

- Call the ethics contact; describe the question in one or two sentences.
- If the case is urgent, treat first; ask for advice when the patient is safe.
- Give the facts in summary, without identifiers, to the consultation.
- Record the advice you received and what the team decided.
- Ask the ethics contact to log the consultation.
- Stop and get help straight away if: the patient is at immediate risk. Treat the risk first.

1. Purpose

To describe step by step how a staff member or family asks for ethics advice and what happens next [EC].

2. Scope

Applies to	Staff who ask for advice, the ethics contact, and consultation members
Locations	All services
When	Whenever an ethical dilemma arises in care
Does not apply to	Research ethics (SOP-N05)

3. Definitions

Term	Meaning
Ethics contact	The named person who receives and arranges requests
Consultation note	The written advice from the consultation

4. Background

The policy sets the principle. This procedure sets the steps, so that anyone can use the route without needing to know who sits on the committee.

5. Responsibilities

Role	Responsibility	Competence
Requesting clinician	Describes the case; makes the decision	Clinical competence
Ethics contact	Receives request; arranges consultation; records advice	Trained contact
Consultation members	Give advice in writing	Ethics training (EC)

6. Materials and equipment

Item	Requirement	Condition
Request form	Current version	Available on each ward
Consultation log (GOV-REG-003)	Current	Updated after each consultation

7. Safety

- Do not include patient identifiers in writing outside the approved route.

8. Before you start

- Gather the facts, the patient’s wishes and any advance decision in the record.

9. Procedure

Step 1. Make the request.

- Call or email the ethics contact, or complete the request form.
- State the question and whether it is urgent.

Key point: Urgent requests are not delayed by the paperwork.

Step 2. Prepare the summary.

- Write a one-page summary: diagnosis, options, the patient's wishes, the views of the family, and the question.
- Remove names and identifiers, using a case code.

Key point: A short summary lets members focus on the ethical question.

Step 3. Attend or send the case to the consultation.

- Attend the consultation, or send the summary if you cannot attend.
- Answer questions honestly, including what you do not know.

Key point: The consultation depends on accurate facts.

Step 4. Record the advice and decision.

- Record the advice and the team's decision in the clinical record, without the ethics note, if the policy requires.
- Tell the patient and family what was decided and why, where appropriate.

Key point: The decision and its reasons belong in the record, so the next team knows.

Step 5. Log the consultation.

- The ethics contact enters the case on GOV-REG-003 within 5 days.

Key point: The log is how the route is shown to work.

10. Decision points

- If the advice is not followed, the team records the reason in the clinical record.

11. Special situations

Situation	Action
Out-of-hours urgent case	Use the on-call senior clinician as the first contact; the ethics contact follows up next working day (EC).

12. Escalation

- If the route fails or cannot respond, inform the chief executive the same day.

13. Monitoring

Measure	Target	Frequency	Owner	If not met
Consultations completed within the time set	100%	Monthly	Ethics contact	Escalate to chief executive
Log entries complete	100%	Monthly	Ethics contact	Complete within 5 days

14. Records

Record	Kept in	Retention
Request and summary (case code only)	Restricted ethics file	the period set by the facility’s records policy years
Consultation log (GOV-REG-003)	Governance file	the period set by the facility’s records policy years

15. Training

- Ethics contacts are trained (EC).
- Clinicians receive a short briefing on the route at induction.

16. Related documents

ID	Title	Use
GOV-POL-004	Clinical Ethics Consultation Policy	Principle
GOV-REG-003	Ethics Consultation Log	Log

17. Evidence

Reference	Note

E-009	ASF Expert Committee consensus.

18. Change history

Version	Date	What changed	Approval
1.0	the date of approval	First version	Approved by the ASF Expert Committee
1.1	the date of approval	Internal quality review: corrected cross-references, status wording and document control	Approved by the ASF Expert Committee

E-learning for this document

- Healthcare Ethics for ASF Accreditation (A-07)

References

- Accréditation Sans Frontières (2026). ASF Expert Committee consensus on Standard 1. (E-009)

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