

- C. Public interest
- D. Oneself, one's peers, and professional associations
- ___ 6. Accept compensation only in relationship to responsibilities
- ___ 7. Advocate change
- ___ 8. Preserve and secure health information
- ___ 9. Be honest
- ___ 10. Commit to continuing education and lifelong learning

Ethical Decision-Making Matrix

HIM professionals must factor several criteria into their decision making, as illustrated in figure 13.6. These include, but are not limited to

- *Cost:* Can the facility and the health information system afford the improvement in the system?
- *Technological feasibility:* Will the technological application provide accurate and reliable information for the decision-making process?
- *Federal and state laws:* Are there federal or state laws that must be considered before a change is made in the system?
- *Medical staff bylaws:* Are there rules or regulations unique to the facility that require or prohibit an action?
- *Accreditation and licensing standards:* Which agencies have standards that are important to the decision being made? Do the standards allow or prohibit a certain action?
- *Employer policies, rules, or regulations:* Does the facility have policies, rules, or regulations that require or prohibit a decision?

Although these criteria must be assessed in the decision-making process, they cannot be used alone. Virtually every decision the HIM professional makes also must be based on ethical principles and professional values.

Ethicists provide assistance in this process. Glover (2006, 35, 38, 50) has proposed a seven-step process to guide ethical decision making. When faced with an ethical issue, the HIM professional should ask and answer all of the following questions. The questions represent the steps in the ethical decision-making process.

1. What is the ethical question?
2. What facts do you know, and what do you need to find out?
3. Who are the different stakeholders, what values are at stake, and what are the shared and different obligations and interests of each of the stakeholders?
4. What options for action do you have?
5. What decision should you make, and what core HIM values are at stake?
6. What justifies the choice, and what are the values-based reasons to support the decision? What choice or choices cannot be justified?
7. What prevention options can be put into place so that this issue will not come up again?

When a decision must be made about an issue and only one choice is identified, the decision most likely will be based on an individual's narrow moral perspective of right or wrong. If it is an ethical problem, the decision makers must take into account the perspectives of competing stakeholders and their values. Decisions made without this model will not benefit from an ethical decision-making process that considers multiple options.

Figure 13.6. Ethical decision-making matrix

ETHICAL PROBLEM		
Steps	Information	
1. What is the question?		
2. What are the facts?	KNOWN	TO BE GATHERED
3. What are the values? Examine the shared and competing values, obligations, and interests in order to fully understand the complexity of the ethical problem(s).	Patient: HIM Professional: Healthcare professionals: Administrators: Society: Other, as appropriate:	
4. What are my options?		
5. What should I do?		
6. What justifies my choice?	JUSTIFIED	NOT JUSTIFIED
7. What can I do to prevent this ethical problem?		

Source: Harman 2006.