



Guide for Leaders

Focus on Ethics

PART I: OVERVIEW

The intent of Focus on Ethics sessions is to foster dialogue, listening and discussion, and ethical action. The content and structure of the session can be tailored to fit the circumstances of the unit and the organisation.

Before carrying out the session, leaders should be familiar with the following:

- a. Defence Ethics Background
- b. CF/DND Defence Ethics Goals
- c. The Defence Ethics Program
- d. Resources Available

Defence Ethics Background

Canada is first and foremost a democracy. Canadians have a right to expect Defence personnel to follow the highest ethical standards. It is acknowledged that the strength and vitality of the Canadian Forces and the Department of National Defence lies in its ethical culture. Yet, defence can involve the controlled use of destructive power to cause massive destruction of property and, in some cases, of human life. In addition, there have been many changes in Canadian society in the past 25 years that have significantly affected Defence. None, however, have been more pervasive than changes required by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in the Constitution Act of 1982. Values and obligations supported for centuries by traditions and customs were given more force and visibility by being incorporated into the highest law of the land. All of this means that ethics for defence can be very complex and demanding.

CF/DND Defence Ethics Goals

- To be an organization that does the right thing by helping its personnel do the right thing and not condoning the actions of those who would do otherwise.
- To make sound ethical decisions based on values and obligations consistent with the Statement of Defence Ethics.
- To be an organization of integrity that consistently practices being fair and honest, loyal and courageous.
- To fulfil our social responsibility to Canada and its government in our role as Defence professionals everywhere we serve.

The Defence Ethics Program

The Canadian Forces and the Department of National Defence gave official approval to the Defence Ethics Program in December 1997. It is a program that applies to both military and civilian personnel. It is a value-based program that assumes that Defence ethics must be guided first and foremost by values that are considered consistent with the democratic nature of Canada. The Defence Ethics Program provides an Ethical Framework appropriate for Defence as an institution functioning within a democracy.

PART II: RUNNING A SESSION

A session involves: a) Pre-session tasks; b) The Focus on Ethics Session; and c) Post-session tasks.

Pre-session Tasks

As Leader, you should start by producing a personal assessment of the ethical challenges and concerns facing the unit. Items on the list should be prioritized. You should avoid issues and cases you know to be currently under investigation. You should also avoid issues that infringe on the privacy rights of personnel. You should make every effort to ensure that the session does not turn into a forum for personal accusations or to accuse anyone of specific wrongdoing. Finally, it is important that you manage the time allocated to the session well, to ensure that there is sufficient time to reach agreement on recommendations to be passed to the Chain of Command. Suggested timings are: 15% Awareness; 50% Discussion; 25% Mitigation; 10% Recommendations.

Your personal assessment can benefit from being supplemented by input from other sources. For example, you can benefit from consulting your leadership cadre. Since the participants themselves also represent an important source of information, the Participants' Pre-session Ethics Survey (attached) can be a very effective tool. In that case, prior to the session, forward the Pre-session Ethics Survey form to all attendees. Explain to them that the survey is meant to allow all attendees a chance to start reflecting on the ethical issues facing their place of employment. The survey form may be completed and collected prior to, or during, the session. The survey results should be analysed, grouped, prioritized, and may form the basis of discussion during the session. Anonymity must be respected.

Finally, you may wish to use the Leader's Ethical Climate Assessment (LECA) prototype which can be accessed, as with all the tools, on the Defence Ethics Program website.

The Focus on Ethics Session

The aim of a Focus on Ethics Session is to use dialogue as a means of maintaining and enhancing unit ethical fitness. An Ethics Session offers leaders a unique opportunity to meet with their personnel to discuss ethical issues that are relevant to their local place of employment. An Ethics Session involves the following steps: 1) Awareness; 2) Group discussion of ethical issues; 3) Mitigation of concerns; and, 4) Key issues to be passed to the Chain of Command.

Step 1: Awareness:

◆***Leader presents DND/CF expectations. (Reference : Statement of Defence Ethics; set of slides)*** We conform to the statement of defence ethics in order to:

Be an organization that does the right thing by helping its personnel do the right thing and by not condoning the actions of those who would do otherwise.

Be respectful of human beings above all.

Make sound ethical decisions based on values and obligations consistent with the Statement of Defence Ethics

Fulfil our social responsibility to Canada and its government in our role as Defence professionals everywhere we serve

Perform our duty to the highest ethical standard

Improve the level of ethical conduct

◆***Leader reviews what is involved in ethics. (Ref pocket card and set of slides)***

Ethics involves knowing the difference between what is right and wrong and doing the right thing.

Ethical concerns include whatever personnel feel weakens the ethical climate of their work area.

Ethical dilemmas are situations in which:

- You are unsure of the right thing to do - *Uncertainty Dilemma*; or
- Two or more of our obligations are in conflict – *Competing Obligation Dilemma*; or
- Harm may be caused no matter what you do - *Harm Dilemma*

◆Leader explains how to make a decision: (reference pocket card and set of slides)

How do I decide what to do?

Consider your obligation to act. (Is there a compelling need? What is your capability to do something?)

What are the issues? What are the facts?

Weigh the options, including in your assessment ethical principles and obligations

Choose the best option that considers:

Rules

Consequences

Care for others

Values

If unsure, you talk to others, to those you trust, to your friends or your superiors or authorities. You accept responsibility for your actions

◆Leader explains types of assistance available:

Verbal expression of concern to anyone you trust

Formal mechanisms:

Chain of command

Grievance procedure

Member Assistance Program

DND CF help line for Harassment and sexual assault

Ombudsman

Military Police

Defence ethics Program staff

Internal Disclosure

Step 2: Group discusses its own ethical issues:

The leader presents the prioritized list of ethical concerns and issues produced during the pre-session phase. (Note: alternatively, the leader may wish to make the priority-setting a group activity) If the leader has not had personnel complete the Pre-session Ethics Survey prior to the session, he or she may wish to do so at this time. In that case, personnel complete the form and return the form to the leader. The leader incorporates the ethical issues or concerns into his or her personal assessment of ethical issues. Then, the floor is open for discussion of the issues in order of priority. (Note: The leader could use a flip chart or other visual aids.) The leader should guard against personal attacks and the identification of specific individuals.

The leader should also:

Hold back on his/her personal opinions

Listen carefully

Restate without judgement

Refrain from trying to shape the outcome

Step 3: Group discusses what can be done to resolve the ethical issues or concerns:

What can we do ourselves as a group? What can the system do to help? It is useful to try to identify strategies for resolution of issues against being rules based, consequence based, care based or value based. The group discusses the message the group wishes to convey to the Chain of Command

Step 4: Group summarises key issues and frames comments to pass to their Chain of Command

See the form available to do this (attached). Try to describe the issues and comments very briefly. The key is to sensitise others as to what you think. It is a chance to express ethical voice to the chain of command.

No attribution (unit, organisation or personnel identifications) is required

Feedback will be used to sensitize management about the ethical issues that concerns us, and to reflect back to the DND/CF community what our issues are. Hopefully some positive influence on these issues can be made

Post-session Tasks

◆ *Leaders bring to the attention of their chain of command important decisions and concerns that have come out of the Focus on Ethics Session 2003.*

◆ *Leaders plan to provide feedback to personnel on action taken at a specified future date.*

Focus on Ethics 2003 Session Feedback Summary Form

Number of attendees:

Significant issues raised?

Significant mitigation ideas or feedback comments?

Return to:

Focus on Ethics 2003: Participants' Pre-session Ethics Survey Form

Ethical Issues Assessment

Ethics is about right and wrong. What do you feel is the most serious ethical issue or concern facing your work area today?

My most serious ethical concern or issue is:

What can we do to resolve the ethics concerns raised?

Note: please do not sign this form so that anonymity can be respected.

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