



COMMUNITY ETHICS NETWORK

2009 Town Hall Report

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Prepared by:
Kim Ibarra, Program Evaluation Specialist,
Toronto Central Community Care Access Centre
And
Anna Ma, Ethics Summer Student,
Toronto Central Community Care Access Centre

1. OVERVIEW

On June 10th, 2009, the Community Ethics Network (CEN) held its first town hall meeting at VHA Home Healthcare. There was an 83% attendance, with 33 of 40 registered persons attending. The purpose of this meeting was for the CEN Steering Committee to release their 2009-10 work plan. David Gibson presented 'A Critical Path for Implementation of Ethics Program' and members were given a brief overview of the implications of the newly proclaimed Apology Act by Susan Burns. Following the updates and presentations, the Town Hall provided its members with the opportunity to collaborate and share resources during facilitated small group discussions on; 'Training the Trainer' and Educating front-line staff. The goal of this meeting was to engage CEN members, to share knowledge and to learn from each other, and helping members *"really feel like they are a part of something, as members of the Network"*.

The Town Hall began with Camille Orridge, the Executive Director of the Toronto Central CCAC and one of the 12 founding members of the CEN welcoming all the members and reflecting on the history and development of the Network. She congratulated the Network on its continual commitment to advancing the practice of ethics in the community healthcare and support services sector.

Following Camille's presentation, Caroline Hunter and Frank Wagner, Co-Chairs of CEN, presented the CEN work plan for 2009 – 2010 as developed by the CEN Operational Committee. The work plan, including the Town Hall, was based on members' feedback from the Outreach Project and the strategic priorities identified at the 2008 Fall Conference. Kimberley Ibarra, former consultant for the CEN and Anna Ma, Ethics summer student at the Toronto Central CCAC, also updated the participants on the development of an independent Community Ethics Network website.

Following the presentation by Frank on priority setting and the work plan, David Gibson of Bellwoods Centres for Community Living presented "A Critical Path for Implementation of an Ethics Program or How Do We Get Ethics Embedded in Our Organizational Culture?" This presentation provided strategies on building infrastructure to support ethics at the organizational level and *"how to keep ethics at the forefront"*. The first step to implementing an ethics policy is to establish a decision-making framework and as members of the Network, David pointed out, there already are tools available to the Network, thus members should take advantage of the existing resources. *"We shouldn't be reinventing the wheel in each organization"*, instead modify and tailor the tools to *"make it work for your organization"*. To embed ethics into an organization's culture, David advised that ethical decision-making should not be made as an administrative add-on. Instead, everyone at the organization from front-line staff to the Board of Directors should be engaged in ethical practice using methods including outcome measurements of client/staff satisfaction. Following David's presentation, participants shared their own examples of ethical infrastructure at their respective organizations.

During the second half of the Town Hall, attendees participated in one of the two facilitated focus group discussions on; 1) 'Training the Trainer' and 2) Educating front-line staff. The small groups, guided by discussion questions generated from a preplanning tool from the Canadian Institute for Cultural Activities were given half an hour to explore their respective topics. Afterward, the groups re-converged for the large group report back session. At the large group

session, the group facilitators represented their group and presented a summary to everyone to show the issues, discussion and ideas which were generated during their discussions.

A brief session on the Apology Act lead by Susan Burns from COTA Health briefly reviewed the Act and its implication, and gave participants an update of the Act's most recent development. Susan's presentation communicated that the Act was helping the healthcare profession in *"moving away from the culture of blame"* and as a result, allowing the health professionals to *"build relationships with our clients"*. When the Apology Act session was over, participants' interest in the topic was renewed. Someone later expressed that *"the Apology Act presentation would have been good if time allowed to delve deeper into the Act and to learn more about how it can be incorporated into an organizational structure"*. A request was also made by a participant for the documents on the Act to be shared along with any additional useful resources concerning the Act. When participants were asked after the presentation how many would have been interested in signing up for the Apology Act discussion, there was a new show of hands from some who had not initially known about that particular session, and others who were not initially interested until after the presentation.

Carolyn MacLeod of Central CCAC and Christine Houston of GBC lead the discussion on 'Train the Trainer', a model for building ethics capacity. The session began with a discussion about what a 'Train the Trainer' model means, and then went into a discussion on developing the model, looking at who would make a good trainer, who is at stake, the aims and potential outcomes of the model, and concluded with a list of resources needed to pilot the model.

The second small group discussion was lead by Caroline Hunter from VHA Home Health Care and facilitated by Julia Sommers from We Care Health Services on how to educate front-line staff. It was recognized that as members of the Network, representatives of the Network membership need to make ethics a part of the standing agenda. This group discussed how to make ethics education relevant to staff, how to encourage staff to adhere to ethical practices, the logistic challenges of training infrastructure, and finally the resources needed and available to the Network for building ethics capacity.

2. SMALL GROUP FINDINGS

TRAIN THE TRAINER

When asked what they felt the 'Train the Trainer' model is, participants responded that it is a model about *"building capacity"*, *"increasing the sphere of influence"*, *"spreading knowledge"*, *"maximizing resources"*, *"being practical and economical"* and *"promote sustainability"*. Another pointed out that this model will be *"distinct from the expert trainer – lone ranger model."*

The individuals who the participants thought would best fit the role of the trainer were those *"who could take information back to [their] organization and tailor it to individual needs"*, including having the abilities to *"take [the learning] from the board level to the front-line"* and facilitating learning at all levels. Some qualities of the trainer that were brainstormed included individuals who *"demonstrated interest in ethics"*, were *"credible"*, *"motivated and able to communicate"*, *"cross-functional"*, *"a risk taker"*, *"well connected to people"*, *"good[at]*

networking and [building] relationships” and were able to “know and understand their audience”.

The stakeholder analysis of the ‘Train the Trainer’ model revealed that all levels of client care had a stake in the model. It was agreed that clients have the most at stake if care providers do not have the capacity and understanding to make ethical decisions, because *“it’s the clients that suffer”*. The success of the ‘Train the Trainer’ model will also make a difference for staff, trainers, Senior Directors and Organizational Development managers, because all have a responsibility in upholding a standard of quality service.

Participants understood the ‘Train the Trainer’ model to be able to generate *“empowerment, consistency in message”, “spread of knowledge”, “synergy” and “inter-professional collaboration”*. This model was thought to be able to *“level the power dynamic”* between front-line staff and trainer, and induce a change *“from hidden to transparent”* practices. The potential benefits of utilizing a ‘Train the Trainer’ model are to enable staff at ground level to be trained and be able to identify ethical issues, identify where there might be barriers to ethical decision-making, and where there are alliances. It was also hoped that the model will encourage self-reflection, increase awareness, and give permission to staff to take the time to reflect and share with each other; encouraging learning from each other’s experience. By utilizing a ‘Train the trainer’ model, participants felt it would allow trainers to *“be inspired and have confidence”* and *“feel supported by other train-the-trainers, other ethics champions, and peers”*.

The resources which are perceived to be needed to build the ‘Train the Trainer’ program were human resource, which might require a strategic alliance with other organizations, time, funding, commitment at the organizational level, senior level buy-in, and technology (e.g. portable learning tools). Also in order to cater to the needs of front-line staff, it was recognized that it is important for the model to be a mobile program. The general consensus regarding the ‘Train the Trainer’ model was, in order to be successful; it will need human purpose and drive.

EDUCATING FRONT-LINE STAFF

To enhance the front-line staff’s understanding and retention of ethics material, it was agreed that front-line staff would be able to relate and retain more if real life dilemmas were used during ethics training, because *“case studies from the literature are not as strong as the real life experience of those from colleagues”*. Front-line staffs were recognized as having valuable personal experiences and stories and therefore should be encouraged to share their experiences with each other at training. The real life stories will *“get people to start talking”* and facilitate discussion. One participant mentioned that they had found on-going case studies to be a fantastic educational tool, because *“sometimes a case will involve multiple staff, and through group discussion, one can get the different perspectives on the case”*. It was also thought that the sharing of personal experiences could be *“relieving [for staff] when they learn that they are not the only one encountering the same issues”*. Finally, it was pointed out that ethics education is not only for front-line staff, but should also include administrative staff: those in the office, finance and etc. not working directly in the community.

On the topic of training and orientation, one participant found ethics training 3 months after the initial orientation training to have been valuable, *“because with the 3 months of hands-on experience, they can really understand the ethic dilemmas and be able to understand how the*

ethical concepts all fit into their work". Also it was commented that *"during the first couple of days of orientation, one does not yet have questions to ask [at training], because one might not have experienced many ethical situations yet, and there is so much to absorb during orientation; there is insufficient time to understand the ethics education deeply."* Having said that, it was noted that it was still very important to have some ethics education during orientation, because before starting the job, it was recognized that it is critical for front-line staff to understand: 1) what is an ethical dilemma, and 2) where to get help when faced with one.

To encourage staff to adhere to ethical practices, it was suggested that member organizations need to emphasize ethics, make staff aware, and let them know they need to adhere to ethical standards. One participant noticed that within their organization, the limiting factor was often times not because staff did not want to adhere to ethics, but that many were unable to identify ethics. A participant suggested that to encourage ethical practices there could be *"an annual declaration policy where staff will be refreshed of the code of ethics and asked to sign it."*

Regarding education infrastructure, a participant brought up a logistic issue where they were finding it *"hard to get all staff together for training"* and was interested in how to build an infrastructure around ethics education. Someone suggested an on-line model for training, but was recognized by another participant that *"the interaction between participants is a vital component to learning"*, which the on-line model will be unable to provide. Another suggestion was to *"offer multiple training sessions on different dates"* to accommodate everyone, however those who have facilitated ethics training did not recommend it, because they have found it *"hard to facilitate multiple sessions"* when they were the only trainer available to their agency. When the participants with experience as ethics trainer were asked whether their agency had others capable of training, one participant responded *"yes"*, but that *"other leaders were not confident [in ethics] to feel comfortable to present [and train]"*. A final solution offered was to incorporate ethics training into staff training, since all will have to attend training, and will therefore be present to receive the additional ethics education.

During the discussion on resources, a participant said that *"it'll be great to get a second opinion"* which received an enthusiastic response of *"how about use each other [members of CEN] as resources!"* However, there was a concern about being held responsible after providing the second opinion. It was suggested the second opinions could be accepted as recommendations instead as a way to protect the advice giver. When asked how members can utilize the Network as a resource, one participant suggested picking up the phone and calling, another suggested the use of a chat room, provided that there was a comprehensive checklist/guideline in place for members to fill in the necessary background information about their case. It was suggested that it would also be helpful if the background information summary could include the ethical issue and how one wants to be helped, in order for other members to effectively assess the case and provide constructive feedback. *"Chat room is a good resource if you want to read up on something"*, but can also be *"very tedious and is hard to maintain an on-going conversation"*. It was recognized that even with a checklist of background information, one would need to *"peel away the layers"* to understand the context of the case.

The take home message of the 'Educating Front-line Staff' was to *"keep it simple"*, and *"make it relevant"*.

3. EVALUATION REPORT

Overall, the participants felt the Town Hall was excellent and had contributed to their learning. They felt the order and flow of the different activities were effective and very well organized. Participants enjoyed the opportunity to share issues and difficulties with other organizations and that the best part was “*being aware of what other organizations are doing, and learning together*”. The Town Hall Forum was thought to have been very useful and was able to meet the participants’ and their respective organization’s needs. At the end of the meeting, one participant wrote they were “*excited to go back to [their] company and start implementing the process [learned today]*”.

The session on priority setting and the work plan was well received, however it was commented by one participant that the pace of the session could have been “*pick[ed] up on the context setting and reporting of work plan*”. The presentation on the *Critical Path* was just the right length in duration, and a great success. 94% of the participants found the presentation very valuable and the session was commented on the evaluation by several participants as being the best part of the Town Hall.

For the small group discussion sessions, participants enjoyed the opportunity to be involved in discussions and thought the “*facilitators were great!*” 82% of respondents¹ found the sessions to be extremely effective and 12 out of 17 found the use of an opinion leader as a group facilitator to be very effective. Almost two thirds of the respondents felt the time allotted for the small group discussion was perfect, while one third wanted to have more time for discussion². Comments for the ‘Train the trainer’ group were on a whole positive and the session was quoted to be “*extremely well run*”. From the comments received, it seemed that the objectives of the ‘Train the Trainer’ program and its collaborative process were unclear to a couple of participants, because one wrote that they were “*looking at the CEN to develop the model and then bringing it to the membership for test[ing]*” and another emphasized they were seeking “*something that I can take back for immediate use*”. The group on ‘Educating Front-line Staff’ were seeking to find more feasible methods of delivering ethics education including having other ethics capacity within their organization to conduct education sessions, and having an education infrastructure.

The reporting back of the small groups into a large group at the end of the meeting was thought to be ‘considerably’ and ‘to a great extent’ effective by 87% of the participants. Someone commented that “*the large group was a great way to learn from other groups and to summarize our own group’s learning*”.

Finally, Maria was recognized in the evaluation for doing an amazing job organizing the Town Hall. “*Keep the momentum of CEN going!*”

¹ 14/17 participant found the session to be extremely effective.

² Of the 13 respondents, 4 felt the session could have been longer, 8 felt it should stay the same and 1 wanted it to be shorter.

4. NEXT STEPS

The CEN Steering Committee will continue to keep an eye on the Apology Act and keep membership informed of changes. The Network will also look into piloting the ‘Train the Trainer’ model at a CEN member organization or a few, if more organizations are interested. Finally the CEN should continue to find methods and mediums (e.g. web-site) to encourage more collaboration between members of the Network.