



Board Governing Policy

5.23 Just Culture

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Policy Title	Just Culture
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Preamble: As Catholic health organizations, Covenant Health, Covenant Care and Covenant Living acknowledge that the provision of overall excellence in care and services (including safety) to the patients, residents, families and communities we serve is paramount to how we live and are accountable to our mission and values. Likewise, we also acknowledge that for those who serve – our staff and volunteers – to work within our organizations provides a community of meaning and purpose, and provides personal fulfilment and flourishing in their lives, and we are also called to support this. An organization’s culture is shaped by many factors. When it comes to the specific intersection between provision of safe care and services, and the environment for those who serve, the existence of an overall patient/resident safety culture is of critical importance. Healthcare organizations have at times followed a model of ‘shame and blame’ when something goes wrong during the delivery of care.

Description: A patient/resident safety culture is first and foremost a **just culture**; also crucial is a healthy and supportive environment for a culture of reporting and learning. A just culture is important in that it recognizes that individuals should not be disciplined for errors or system factors over which they have no control. It provides an atmosphere of trust which is essential for building a strong patient/resident safety culture. In a just culture, staff feel supported and are treated with respect and dignity, even in those situations where something has gone wrong. They are willing to talk openly about patient/resident safety problems because they know the focus is on understanding system factors. They also know their actions will be assessed appropriately through a fair, consistent and transparent process. In a just culture, everyone plays a role in patient/resident safety and is committed to learning and improving safety together.

However, a just culture must be differentiated from a “no-blame” culture. A just culture does not tolerate *conscious* disregard of clear risks to patients, or gross misconduct (e.g. falsifying a record, performing duties while intoxicated, deviations to maximize personal gain, etc.).

Purpose: Because it acknowledges error and complex system factors that contribute to non-compliance as a fact, and does not discipline individuals for system failures, a just culture can improve safety of care and services because over time, staff are encouraged

to report and discuss errors. Reporting of adverse events and close calls (including self-reporting) increases, and therefore supports a learning culture and an increase in improvement. The result is that care for those we serve becomes safer, the work environment for those who serve is healthier and supportive, and professional accountability is maintained.

Policy: The Board of Directors of Covenant Health, Covenant Care and Covenant Living are committed to the continuous improvement of care and services and therefore support a just culture as a key component of the approach to errors, adverse events and close calls, and the reporting of patient/resident care incidences by Covenant Health staff, physicians, students and volunteers. Our organizations will emphasize trust, system improvement, discovery, learning, and sharing in a multi-disciplinary and collaborative environment. Lessons learned will be applied in order to prevent or reduce occurrences of similar errors in the future.

References: Catholic Health Alliance of Canada (2012). Articles 146, 168, 184. *Health Ethics Guide* (3rd ed.) (pp. 93, 95, 104 & 109). Ottawa, ON: Catholic Health Alliance of Canada.

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