The Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists (Third Edition, 2000): Summary of 10 Steps for Ethical Decision Making

The Canadian Psychological Association includes 10 steps for ethical decision making in its ethics code that help psychologists to arrive at a resolution of a conflict after it has already been identified as an ethical issue (Canadian Psychological Association. 2000). Many similarities may be seen to the previous model. A synopsis of these steps follows:

1. Identify individuals and groups potentially affected by the decision.
2. Identify ethically relevant issues and practices, including interests, rights, and any relevant characteristics of
    a. the individuals and groups involved, and
    b. the setting (system or circumstances) in which the ethical problem arose.
3. Consider how personal bias, stress, or self-interest might influence your choices between various courses of action.
4. Develop several courses of action.
5. Analyze likely short-term, ongoing, and long-term risks and benefits of each course of action on the individual(s) or group(s) likely to be affected (e.g., client, family, employees, employing institution, students, research participants, colleagues, the discipline of psychology, the professional association, self).

6. Choose a course of action after conscientiously applying existing principles, values, and standards.
7. Take action, and be ready to assume full responsibility for the consequences.
8. Evaluate the results of acting.
9. Assume responsibility for the consequences of acting, correct any negative consequences, and re-engage in the decision making process if the ethical issue is not resolved.
10. Take action as is warranted and feasible to prevent future occurrences of this dilemma (e.g., communicate with colleagues, problem solve with them, change your procedures and practices accordingly).

Canadian psychologists are reminded that this is a “time-consuming deliberation” and they are encouraged to consult with parties that are affected by the ethical problem (if appropriate) and also with colleagues and advisory bodies. This is a carefully crafted model that helps neophyte and senior psychologists alike.