

Dear Public Health Partner,

We write to you on behalf of the Ethics Section of the American Public Health Association (APHA). You were identified as a stakeholder in APHA's adoption of a new Public Health Code of Ethics at its 2019 Annual Meeting. The new code presents and explains the "ethical standards and obligations for both public health practitioners and institutions, and it is intended to guide individual and collective decision making, especially in ethically challenging situations"¹

We have thus prepared this brief informational packet for you and other stakeholders. We hope that the information contained herein will be useful to you as a public health worker, researcher, educator, or other role that supports the mission of public health. Included in this packet is:

- A link to the new Public Health Code of Ethics is available at the section's APHA website:
 - https://www.apha.org/-/media/files/pdf/membergroups/ethics/code_of_ethics
- Tabular summary of the key considerations for Ethical Analysis (Table 1)
- An early list of resources introducing or discussing the Code (Table 2).

We are always growing our collection of materials and would be grateful for any information or materials you may develop to introduce or use the code. As we develop additional supporting materials for dissemination, we would love to share them with you or others you name.

You may—likely will be—reading this message in a time of great strife. Recent events have once again underscored the unequal health burden carried by minority groups in our society, whether the public health threat comes from an infectious respiratory disease or police violence. The Code reminds us of our obligation to consider our role in the systems that connect these public health issues and invites us to engage in self-reflection as we endeavor to promote human flourishing and strive our utmost to be healers² in the face of those forces that oppose it:

The opposite of human flourishing is not only disease or ill health but also domination, inequity, discrimination, exploitation, exclusion, suffering, and despair: in a word, the stultification and denial of optimal human self-realization and thriving human communities.

Sincerely,

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¹ *Public Health Code of Ethics*. 2019

² Adapted from Albert Camus' *The Plague*, in depicting Dr. Rieux's resolution to compile his chronicle "so that he should not be one of those who hold their peace but should bear witness in favor of those plague-stricken people...(Vintage, 1991, p.308).

Table 1. Key Considerations for Ethical Analysis¹

Consideration	Ask	Motivation
<i>Permissibility</i>	Would the action being considered be ethically wrong even if it were to have a good outcome?	Evaluating the consequences of a proposed action or decision alone is always ethically pertinent, but not ethically sufficient. To identify actions that are ethically suspect, the social and cultural context of the proposed action should be considered.
<i>Respect</i>	Would the proposed action be demeaning or disrespectful to individuals and communities even if it benefited their health?	Respect supports human dignity within transactions, exchanges, and relationships. These considerations remain relevant even when there is a significant disparity in need or resources among the parties involved.
<i>Reciprocity</i>	Have we done what is reasonable to offset the potential harms and losses that the proposed action imposes on individuals and communities?	The ethical ideal of reciprocity attests to the notion that social life should reflect mutual exchanges and cooperation. Reciprocity obligates us to relieve, as much as is reasonable, the burdens of adhering to public health policy.
<i>Effectiveness</i>	Is it reasonable to expect, based on best available evidence and past experience, that the proposed action would achieve its stated health goals?	Given the best information available, a proposed public health action or decision should be able to achieve its intended public health goal. Action for its own sake without a reasonable likelihood of effective success is not ethically justified.
<i>Responsible Use of Scarce Resources</i>	Would the proposed action demonstrate good stewardship and deserve the trust that the public has invested in public health practitioners?	Even if permissible and effective on its own terms, ethical decision making requires consideration of whether a given action merits expenditure of resources in relation to other needs or health goals that require attention.
<i>Proportionality</i>	Would the proposed action demonstrate that public health practitioners are using their power and authority judiciously and with humility?	Virtually every public health action has benefits and costs, particularly those for which difficult ethical judgments must be made. Proportionality involves assessments of the relative effects, positive and negative, of an action or a decision.
<i>Accountability and Transparency</i>	Would the proposed action withstand close ethical scrutiny and be justified by valid reasons that the general public will understand?	Public health practice relies on the support and voluntary cooperation of individuals and communities, both of which require trust. Trust is built on ongoing transparency and accountability.
<i>Public Participation</i>	In deciding on a proposed action, have all potentially affected stakeholders had a meaningful opportunity to participate?	Public participation refers to the meaningful involvement of members of the public in research, decision making, planning, policy, and practice. Public participation should ensure that participants and decision makers alike are mutually informed and engaged in dialogue and exchange.

¹ American Public Health Association (APHA). *Public Health Code of Ethics*. 2019.

Table 2. List of Resources Introducing or Discussing the Public Health Code of Ethics as of June 2020.

Source	Title	Description	Available at:
American Journal of Public Health	Public Health Code of Ethics: Deliberative Decision-Making and Reflective Practice	A brief description of the Code and the rationale behind its development.	https://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/10.2105/AJPH.2020.305568
APHA 2019 Annual Meeting Blog	Let's Get Ethical	A description of the introduction of the new Code at the 2019 APHA Annual Meeting.	http://www.publichealthnewswire.org/articles/2019/11/05/new-public-health-code-of-ethics
<i>The Nation's Health</i>	New code serves as ethical guidance for public health: Revised Code first in US Since 2002	A longer version of the "Let's Get Ethical" resource above, published by <i>The Nation's Health</i>	http://thenationshealth.aphapublications.org/content/49/10/1.3
<i>The Synergist</i>	Comparing Ethical Codes	Comparison of Codes with a focus on the APHA Code and the Board for Global EHS Credentialing	https://synergist.aiha.org/20200607-comparing-codes-of-ethics
<i>Public Health Perspectives on Disability</i>	Ethics and Public Disability	Book chapter (forthcoming) Discussion and critique of the code.	Gaventa, B., Stahl, D. & McDonald, K. (forthcoming). Public Health Ethics and Disability: Centering Disability Justice. In D.Lollar, K. Froehlich-Grobe, W. (Eds.) Horner-Johnson <i>Public Health Perspectives on Disability</i> . Springer.