

HEALTH COMMISSION
City and County of San Francisco
Resolution 15-15

ENDORISING THE PRINCIPLES OF ETHICAL PRACTICES OF PUBLIC HEALTH

WHEREAS, the Institute of Medicine defines public health as “what we, as a society, do collectively to assure the conditions in which people can be healthy”; and

WHEREAS, DPH officials make public health decisions to protect and promote the public's health,; and

WHEREAS, moral considerations in public health include producing benefits; avoiding, preventing, and removing harms; producing the maximal balance of benefits over harms and other costs (utility); distributing benefits and burdens fairly (distributive justice) and ensuring public participation, including the participation of affected parties (procedural justice); respecting autonomous choices and actions, including liberty of action; protecting privacy and confidentiality; keeping promises and commitments; disclosing information as well as speaking honestly and truthfully (transparency); and building and maintaining trust; and

WHEREAS, DPH officials evaluate the selection of public health actions (e.g., quarantine or isolation) that might infringe on accepted moral norms by ensuring that an action meets the following conditions: effectiveness, necessary, least infringement, probable benefits outweigh harms, affected stakeholders and treated impartially, and principles are communicated and acceptable to stakeholders; and

WHEREAS, the Public Health Accreditation Board recommends that a “Public Health Code of Ethics” be adopted by health departments to ensure standards and measures for continuous improvement; and

WHEREAS, the “Public Health Code of Ethics” is a set of 12 ethical principles developed by public health officials in the Public Health Leadership Society, with input from many professional organizations, including the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials, and the National Association of County & City Health Officials, and the American Public Health Association; and

BE IT RESOLVED THAT, the San Francisco Health Commission approves and adopts the Public Health Code of Ethics.

Public Health Code of Ethics

1. Public health should address principally the fundamental causes of disease and requirements for health, aiming to prevent adverse health outcomes; and
2. Public health should achieve community health in a way that respects the rights of individuals in the community; and,
3. Public health policies, programs, and priorities should be developed and evaluated through processes that ensure an opportunity for input from community members; and,
4. Public health should advocate and work for the empowerment of disenfranchised community members, aiming to ensure that the basic resources and conditions necessary for health are accessible to all; and,

5. Public health should seek the information needed to implement effective policies and programs that protect and promote health; and,
6. Public health institutions should provide communities with the information they have that is needed for decisions on policies or programs and should obtain the community's consent for their implementation; and,
7. Public health institutions should act in a timely manner on the information they have within the resources and the mandate given to them by the public; and,
8. Public health programs and policies should incorporate a variety of approaches that anticipate and respect diverse values, beliefs, and cultures in the community; and,
9. Public health programs and policies should be implemented in a manner that most enhances the physical and social environment; and,
10. Public health institutions should protect the confidentiality of information that can bring harm to an individual or community if made public. Exceptions must be justified on the basis of the high likelihood of significant harm to the individual or others; and
11. Public health institutions should ensure the professional competence of their employees; and
12. Public health institutions and their employees should engage in collaborations and affiliations in ways that build the public's trust and the institution's effectiveness.

I hereby certify that the San Francisco Health Commission at its meeting on November 3, 2015 adopted the foregoing resolution.

Mark Morewitz
Executive Secretary to the Health Commission

Bibliography

1. Institute of Medicine. *The Future of Public Health*. National Academy Press (1988). Available at <https://iom.nationalacademies.org/Reports/1988/The-Future-of-Public-Health.aspx>
2. Bernheim RG, Childress JF, Bonnie RJ, and Melnick AL. *Essentials of Public Health Ethics*. Jones & Bartlett Learning (2015)
3. Public Health Leadership Society (2202). Principles of the Ethical Practice of Public Health. Available from: <http://phls.org/CMSuploads/Principles-of-the-Ethical-Practice-of-PH-Version-2.2-68496.pdf>
4. Bernheim RG, Stefanak M, Brandenburg T, Pannone A, Melnick A. *Public health accreditation and metrics for ethics: A case study on environmental health and community engagement*. J Public Health Manag Pract. 2013 Jan-Feb;19(1):4-8. doi: 10.1097/PHH.0b013e31824acb25. PubMed PMID: 23169397.