

Board of Health Manual Public Health Sudbury & Districts Information Sheet

Category

Board of Health Structure & Function

Section

Ethical Practice

Subject

Ethical Practice of Public Health

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Board of Health

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Information

Most professional and many special interest associations have codes of ethics or conduct to which their members must adhere. The purpose of these codes is to ensure, on behalf of the public who deal with the association's members, that the association is safeguarding the standard of services being offered.

Likewise, local health agencies wishing to adopt or maintain a code of ethics should take certain steps to ensure their efficacy.

- The code must be adopted, or accepted, by the Board at a meeting of the Board.
- The code must be well and widely published and known by both Board and staff.
- There must be enforcement procedures and a system of natural justice for those accused of violations. This would include:
 - written complaints
 - notification to the accused

- the opportunity to be heard, together with counsel, before a tribunal of peers
- an appeals process.

Preamble

This code of ethics states key principles of the ethical practice of public health. An accompanying statement lists the key values and beliefs inherent to a public health perspective upon which the ethical principles are based. Public health is understood within this code as what we, as a society, do collectively to assure the conditions for people to be healthy. We affirm the World Health Organization's understanding of health as a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

The code is neither a new nor an exhaustive system of health ethics. Rather, it highlights the ethical principles that follow from the distinctive characteristics of public health. A key belief worth highlighting, and which underlies several of the ethical principles, is the interdependence of people. This interdependence is the essence of community. Public health not only seeks the health of whole communities but also recognizes that the health of individuals is tied to their life in the community.