Facing Ethical Challenges, Dealing with Outcomes: Stories from the Field

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Learning Objectives

- List and describe public health ethical principles and an ethical framework to resolve moral tensions disasters might bring up
- Review scenarios that will illustrate how the framework and principles can be used
- Develop methods to make decisions with collaborators in the midst of a disaster
Biomedical and Public Health Ethics

Autonomy
- Personal autonomy vs. the common good

Beneficence
- Obligation vs. responsibilities

Biomedical and Public Health Ethics (cont)

Non maleficence, minimize harm

Justice

Authority and decision making

Least unfair distribution of benefits and burdens

http://plato.stanford.edu

The Precautionary Principle

Action, even coercive action, must be taken when there is a serious threat to the public’s welfare, often in the face of uncertainty.
Least unfair distribution of benefits and burdens

Jay Johnson
Rob Elkins
Obligation and responsibilities

Mark Oberle
Authority and decision making

Carl Osaki
Poll Question

Have you encountered any situations similar to these in your work?

A. Yes
B. Sort of
C. No
D. No, but I have encountered other kinds of ethical dilemmas

Click on the down arrow if you can’t see the response choices.
Poll Question

Do you have a mechanism for handling ethical dilemmas such as these in your workplace?

A. Yes
B. Sort of
C. No
D. No, but I have some ideas of how we might handle these situations
# Decision Making and Problem Solving

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Protocol for Decision Making in the Midst of Crises: Role of Convener

Step 1. Identify the Problem

Gather & discuss with participants trained to use method
Assure data are accurate, complete and up to date

Define problem clearly
Gather all pertinent data

Determine that a decision must be made
Describe desired outcomes

Proposed by Harvey Kayman, with adaptations from FEMA IS 241
Protocol for Decision Making in the Midst of Crises: Role of Convener

Step 1: Identify the Problem

Gather appropriate stakeholders

Describe problem, resources, and desired outcome

Present data from evidence, models, & expert input

Discuss & analyze problem, data, and options

Describe timeframe to implementation

Proposed by Harvey Kayman, with adaptations from FEMA IS 241
Step 2: Evaluate Alternatives

- Does this solution fit the circumstances?
- Is the action worth doing?
- Will this option meet the objectives?
- Has the cost/benefit ratio been considered?
Identify Constraints

- Technical
- Political
- Safety
- Financial
- Social
- Human resources
- Environmental
- Time urgency
- Legal
- Ethical

Step 2: Evaluate Alternatives

FEMA IS 241
Checklist of Questions to Consider

✓ If you should take on the responsibilities, who are your important partners, other stakeholders, consultants, etc.?

✓ Do you have the data to support your choices?

✓ Do you have the capacity to deliver the resource?

✓ If not, what materials, resources and trainings are needed to expand capacity?

Proposed by Harvey Kayman, with adaptations from FEMA IS 241
Ethical Questions to Consider (cont)

- Is your decision about resource allocation equitable or does that matter?
- Will it result in the “least unfair” distribution of benefits and burdens?
- What gives you the authority to make this decision?
Ethical Questions to Consider

☑ Do you have the time and expertise to examine for bias?

☑ Will implementation interfere with some group’s autonomy in support of the common good?

☑ What are potential consequences: negative, positive, undesired, not anticipated in the past, etc.?
Step 3: Select an Alternative

Determine Objectives

Objectives: measurable targets

- Used to monitor progress and establish priorities
- Based on analysis of the situation and contingencies
Step 4: Implement the Solution

Develop an Action Plan

Identify needed resources:

- How much will it cost?
- Do you have the money to support implementing your decisions?
- If not, can you get the money in time?
- What is the likely source of funding?
- Will your partners provider in kind resources?

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Step 4: Implement the Solution

Build a Plan

- Who?
- Will do what?
- With whom?
- By when?
- Where?
- How?
Later Steps

Step 5: Evaluate the Situation

- Evaluate process
- Improve as needed
- Adapt for use by others
- Create after action report
- Share knowledge with others

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