

Public Health Ethics Activities at State and Local Health Departments: Current Status and Challenges

Telephone Interview Guide

Hello, my name is [INTERVIEWER NAME].

[Introduce project team members on the call.]

Thank you for taking the time to speak with us today.

Thank you for your input on the on-line survey. The purpose of doing the telephone interview is to gather more detailed information about the issues covered in the survey. Like the survey, we will focus on how your health department is currently addressing ethics issues, your needs regarding building ethics infrastructure, and ways to evaluate the impact of those activities. We plan to use the information we gather to improve the public health ethics resources we develop for state and local health departments.

While we have written questions, this is not intended to be a scripted interview. We hope that our questions lead to a detailed discussion about your health department's ethics infrastructure and challenges. During this interview, you will be answering the questions in your professional role as a health official.

Your participation is voluntary. You may stop the interview at any time. This interview will last approximately one hour. I would like to record our conversation and take notes so that I don't miss anything you say. We will also transcribe the content of this interview to facilitate data analysis. In order to preserve your privacy, we will not link your name to your individual responses in our report of the findings. The written report will be made available to you after the completion of the project.

Thank you again for your willingness to participate.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Do I have your permission to record this conversation?

[Turn on recording device.]

CDC estimates the average public reporting burden for this collection of information as **60** minutes per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data/information sources, gathering and maintaining the data/information needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing burden to CDC/ATSDR Information Collection Review Office, 1600 Clifton Road NE, MS D-74, Atlanta, Georgia 30333; ATTN: PRA (0920-0879).

Discussion Focus Area 1: Current Ethics Activities

First, we would like to talk a bit about how your health department addresses ethics issues.

Prompts for discussion:

1. What are the most pressing public health issues that affect the population that your health department serves?
2. Do any of these issues raise ethics concerns?
3. How does your health department typically address these ethics issues?
4. How did you decide on an approach for how you address ethics issues?

If the health department has established an ethics committee:

5. How often does it meet?
6. Who serves on the committee?
7. How are they identified and recruited?
8. How are members appointed? For example, do they serve for a specified term?
9. How are topics identified?
10. Does the committee use a framework to guide its deliberation?
11. How is input from the committee used?
12. What types of issues has the committee addressed?
13. If the health department is accredited, how did going through the accreditation process impact how public health ethics issues are addressed?
14. What are your thoughts about how easy or difficult it is to integrate public health ethics into your work?

If the respondent indicated on the survey that their health department provides public health ethics training:

15. How long have you been providing training?
16. What led you to offer the training?
17. What format is used for the training?

18. To whom is the training offered?
19. Is the training optional or mandatory?
20. How often is it offered?
21. What is the content of the training?
22. Do the staff find the training relevant and useful?
23. Is the training sufficient for building your capacity to address public health issues?

OR

If the respondent indicated on the survey that their health department does not provide public health ethics training:

15. What are some of the reasons that training has not been offered?
16. What are the barriers to offering training?
17. What would help you overcome those barriers?
18. Are there specific challenges that need to be addressed before you can offer public health ethics training?

Discussion Focus Area 2: Needs

In this next section, I'd like to ask you about both the resources and needs your department has regarding public health ethics activities.

Prompts for discussion:

1. What types of resources would help you improve the public health ethics activities at your health department (additional trainings, guidance documents, information on how to establish an ethics committee, including writing an ethics committee charter)?
2. If you had all the necessary resources, how would you best structure a process for examining public health ethics issues (e.g., what components would make up an ideal ethics activity)?
3. Do you know where to find or who to ask for additional resources?
4. Are there specific additional resources that would help or encourage you to implement public health ethics activities?

Discussion Area Focus 3: Resources for Measuring Impact

Our last major topic is about how you might measure the impact of public health ethics activities in your health department.

Prompts for discussion:

1. What has been the impact of your approach for addressing ethics issues?
2. How important is it for you to be able to demonstrate the impact of having a public health ethics process?
3. If you wanted to demonstrate impact, how would you go about doing that?
4. What data sources do you currently have that would allow you to assess the impact of public health ethics activities? Some examples to explore include:
 - o Number of staff who receive ethics training
 - o Requests for ethics consults
 - o Number of ethics committee deliberations
 - o Positive press about health department
 - o Negative press about health department
 - o Complaints from community members
 - o Positive feedback from community
 - o Questionnaires that assess staff knowledge and awareness of public health ethics
 - o Information used to fulfill PHAB accreditation requirements

Closing Questions

We're almost done. Before we finish, I have a few more questions.

1. *What's the most important lesson your department has learned while addressing ethics issues?*
2. *What advice would you have for other health departments regarding establishing a formal ethics process?*
3. *Is there anything else you'd like to share?*

Thank you for participating in in this interview. Your responses are very important to us. As I mentioned at the beginning of our conversation, we will transcribe the content of this interview to facilitate data analysis, and we will share our findings in a written report that will be made available to you after the completion of the project. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to send an email to Phethics@cdc.gov or contact Drue Barrett at 404-639-4690.