

PUBLIC HEALTH ETHICS REVIEW AND CASE STUDY

West Allis Board of Health
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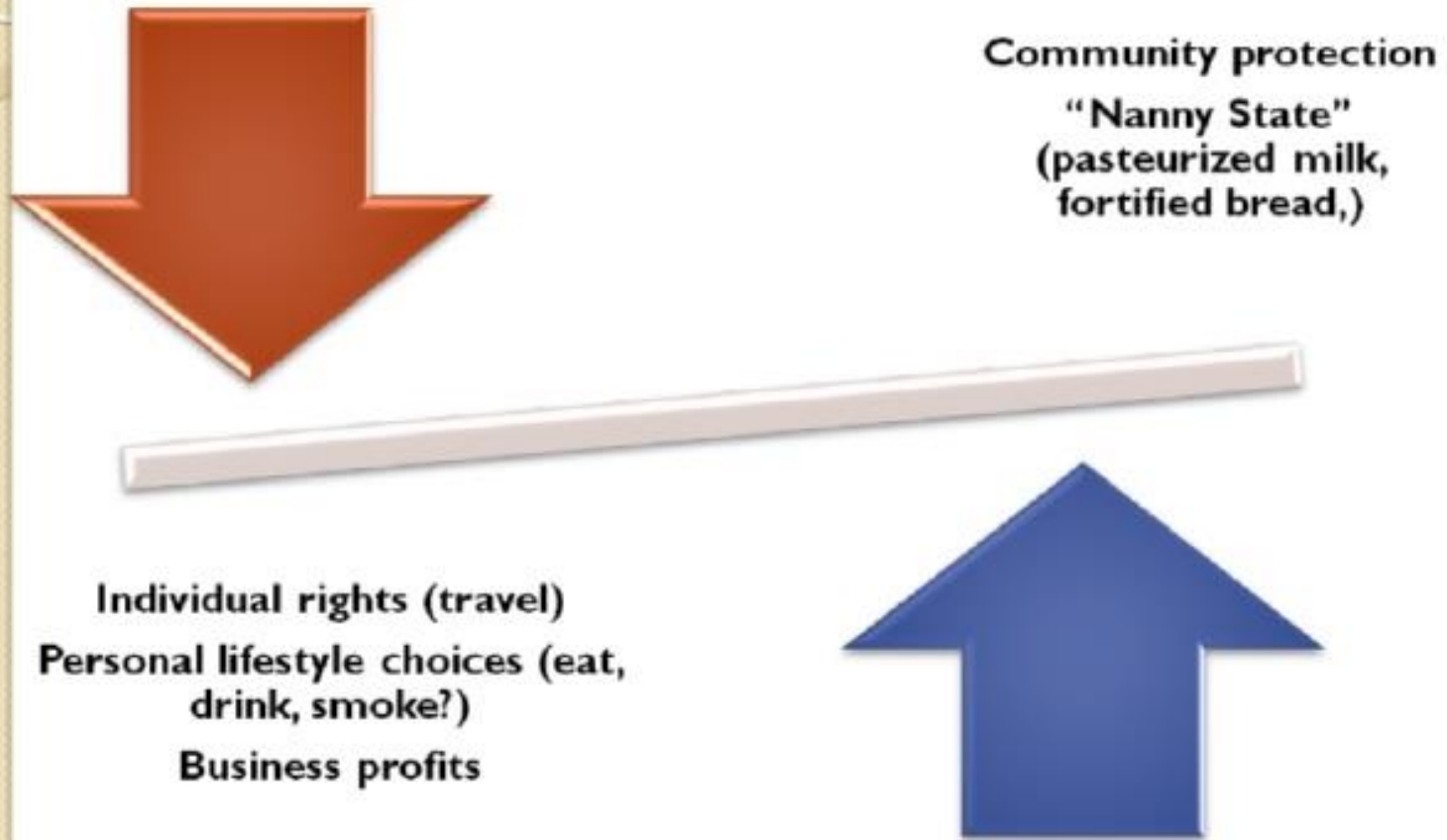


WHAT IS PUBLIC HEALTH ETHICS?



- ❑ Public health ethics helps us decide what we should do and why.

Factors affecting public health ethics



PUBLIC HEALTH ETHICS

- ❑ Public health ethics can be subdivided into a field of study and a field of practice.
- ❑ As a field of study, public health ethics seeks to understand and clarify principles and values which guide public health actions. Principles and values provide a framework for decision making and a means of justifying decisions. Because public health actions are often undertaken by governments and are directed at the population level, the principles and values which guide public health can differ from those which guide actions in biology and clinical medicine (bioethics and medical ethics) which are more patient or individual-centered.

AS A FIELD OF PRACTICE...

- ❑ public health ethics is the application of relevant principles and values to public health decision making. In applying an ethics framework, public health ethics inquiry carries out **three core functions, namely**
 1. identifying and clarifying the ethical dilemma posed
 2. analyzing it in terms of alternative courses of action and their consequences, and
 3. resolving the dilemma by deciding which course of action best incorporates and balances the guiding principles and values.

CLINICAL ETHICS VS. PUBLIC HEALTH ETHICS

Clinical Ethics	Public Health Ethics
Focus on individual patient-provider interactions	Focus on populations, institutions, communities
Individual liberty, autonomy	Interdependence of people
Authority vested in prestige of physicians and medical profession	Authority vested in the police powers of states
Patient consent	Societal consent through the political process; public engagement
Beneficence and non-maleficence	Social good and avoiding social harm
Justice	Social justice and equity

WAHD BOARD OF HEALTH CODE OF ORGANIZATIONAL ETHICS

- ☐ Review Code of Organizational Ethics
- ☐ Review Ethics Advisory Committee
- ☐ Revisions?



GUIDE FOR CONDUCTING ETHICAL ANALYSIS

1. **Analyze ethical issues**
2. **Evaluate the ethical dimensions of the alternate courses of public health action**
3. **Provide justification for public health action**



AN ETHICS GUIDE FOR PUBLIC HEALTH DECISION MAKING

1. Analyze ethical issues

- Risks and harms of concern?
- Public health goals?
- Moral claims of the stakeholders?
- Is the source or scope of legal authority in question?
- Are precedent cases relevant?
- Do professional codes of ethics provide guidance?



AN ETHICS GUIDE FOR PUBLIC HEALTH DECISION MAKING


2. Evaluate the ethical dimensions of the alternate courses of public health action

- **Utility:** Does a particular public health action produce a balance of benefits over harms?
- **Justice:** Are the benefits and burdens distributed fairly?
- **Respect for individual and community interests:** Does the public health action respect individual and civic roles and values (e.g., honesty, trustworthiness)



AN ETHICS GUIDE FOR PUBLIC HEALTH DECISION MAKING

3. Provide justification for public health action

- **Effectiveness:** Is the public health goal likely to be accomplished?
 - **Proportionality:** Will the probable benefits of the action outweigh the infringed moral considerations?
 - **Necessity:** Is overriding the conflicting ethical claims necessary to achieve the public health goal?
 - **Least infringement:** Is the action the least restrictive and least intrusive?
 - **Public justification:** Can public health agents offer public justification that citizens, and in particular those most affected, could find acceptable in principle?
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CASE STUDY OF AN ETHICAL PUBLIC HEALTH CHALLENGE



UNSAFE INJECTIONS – DUTY TO WARN

- ❑ Case Study Handout
- ❑ Conduct Ethical Analysis
 - Analyze the ethical issues in the situation
 - Evaluate the ethical dimension of the alternate courses of action
 - Provide justification for a particular public health action

