



Ethical Values for a Pandemic

This summary statement has been developed by the National Ethics Advisory Committee – Kāhui Matatika o te Motu (NEAC). It aims to identify widely shared ethical values to govern both how to make decisions and what decisions to make in the event of a pandemic. Values recognised in Māori tikanga or kawa (right or correct ways of acting) are identified alongside other values.

With imagination, common sense and attention to each particular situation, we can act on our values even when we have little time, and even when our values pull us in more than one direction. Good planning when we have time can also help us to respond well later, when we may need to make quick decisions.

NEAC considers that these shared values might also be applicable to health and disability settings other than those of a pandemic.

Summary statement of ethical values

Ethical value	Actions associated with the value
Inclusiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> including those who will be affected by the decision including people from all cultures and communities taking everyone’s contribution seriously striving for acceptance of an agreed decision-making process, even by those who might not agree with the particular decision made
Openness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> letting others know what decisions need to be made, how they will be made and on what basis they will be made letting others know what decisions have been made and why letting others know what will come next being seen to be fair
Reasonableness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> working with alternative options and ways of thinking working with and reflecting cultural diversity using a fair process to make decisions basing decisions on shared values and best evidence
Responsiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> being willing to make changes and be innovative changing when relevant information or the context changes enabling others to contribute whenever we (and they) can enabling others to challenge our decisions and actions
Responsibleness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> acting on our responsibility to others for our decisions and actions helping others to take responsibility for their decisions and actions

Ethical value	Actions associated with the value
Minimising harm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> not harming others protecting one another from harm accepting restrictions on our freedom when needed to protect others
Respect/ manaakitanga	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> recognising that every person matters and treating people accordingly supporting others to make their own decisions whenever possible supporting those best placed to make decisions for people who cannot make their own decisions restricting freedom as little as possible, but as fairly as possible, if freedom must be restricted for the public good
Fairness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensuring everyone gets a fair go prioritising fairly when there are not enough resources for all to get the services they need supporting others to get what they are entitled to minimising inequalities
Neighbourliness/ whānaungatanga	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> helping and caring for our neighbours and friends helping and caring for our family/whānau and relations working together when there is a need to be met
Reciprocity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> helping one another acting on any social standing or special responsibilities we may have, such as those associated with professionalism agreeing to extra support for those who have extra responsibilities to care for others
Unity/ kotahitanga	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> being committed to getting through the situation together showing our commitment to strengthening individuals and communities

NOTES

These values are discussed, and applied to a range of settings, from policy planning right through to deciding how best to help a sick family member or neighbour, in *Getting Through Together: Ethical values for a pandemic* (National Ethics Advisory Committee 2007), available at: www.neac.health.govt.nz

The National Ethics Advisory Committee – Kāhui Matatika o te Motu (NEAC) has issued this statement in accordance with its statutory function to “determine nationally consistent ethical standards across the health sector” (New Zealand Public Health and Disability Act 2000, s.16).

NEAC welcomes any feedback on its work, to: neac@moh.govt.nz

SUMMARY

