

Ethical Principles in Health Care Brief Introduction & FAQ

EPIHC in Brief

Ethical Principles in Health Care (EPIHC) is a set of 10 concise, pragmatic and universally applicable values promoting ethical conduct and helping to guide decision-making among private healthcare providers, payors, and investors worldwide. The principles strengthen trust between providers and their stakeholders - a trust essential to delivering the best possible care to the greatest number of patients.

The EPIHC initiative supports World Bank Group goals to achieve Universal Health Coverage and ensure patients' access to high-quality, affordable healthcare. The World Bank and International Finance Corporation (IFC) developed EPIHC in 2019 with extensive input from a diverse group of healthcare providers and policy experts, as well as investors and other health-system stakeholders. EPIHC is a no-fee, collective-action initiative. Its signatories voluntarily commit to follow the EPIHC principles, and it is then up to each organization to determine how it will implement them.

As EPIHC grows, so does its value as a global community offering opportunities to liaise, share best practices and explore collaborations with leading like-minded healthcare organizations around the world. For more information and to become an EPIHC signatory please visit epihc.org or write to the Secretariat at epihcteam@ifc.org

Frequently Asked Questions:

1. What is EPIHC?

EPIHC is a set of 10 concise, pragmatic, and universally applicable principles promoting ethical conduct and helping to guide decision-making for private healthcare providers, payors, and investors worldwide. Adopted voluntarily, these principles aim to help formalize values, shape the behavior of healthcare providers, and strengthen trust between providers and their stakeholders. Such trust is essential to effectively deliver the best possible care to the greatest number of patients.

2. Why join EPIHC?

EPIHC supports the overall development objective of creating stronger healthcare providers, stronger healthcare systems and, ultimately, improved access to high-quality, affordable healthcare. When healthcare providers publicly pledge to adopt the principles and implement changes within their organizations to align to the principles, it brings direct benefits to their staff and their patients, the environment, and the communities they serve. Signatories join a community of like-minded organizations that EPIHC encourages to share best practices, ethical challenges and dilemmas, and insights on ethical behavior.

3. Why do ethical principles matter for my organization?

Healthcare organizations prosper or fail on their reputations, particularly now that social media makes it possible for successes and failures to go viral. Therefore, a public commitment to ethical conduct is a key performance driver to healthcare providers who are successful over the longer term. In the short term, a commitment to ethics may cost some managerial time and energy, and there is the potential to lose patients to less ethically run competitors. Over the longer term these costs tend to be far outweighed by the benefits from a commitment to ethical conduct. Such a commitment reduces the likelihood of public scandals with their associated legal penalties, poor publicity, and damaged relations with the broader community. Even if there is no public scandal, unethical behavior undermines relationships with external stakeholders such as suppliers, consulting doctors, and patients. Unethical conduct also harms an organization's culture by demotivating employees. In contrast, an ethical approach strengthens corporate performance through greater employee retention and motivation, which in turn strengthen relationships with key external stakeholders.

4. How will EPIHC help my organization?

The EPIHC framework provides a solid foundation to improve integrity and transparency in the healthcare sector, resulting in more effective ways of working and heightened trust, benefiting patients, payors, and the broader community.

To each of its signatories, EPIHC provides a platform to network and learn from one another. Signatories are encouraged to share best practices, experience, and resources, including ethical challenges and dilemmas, and to form partnerships to achieve common goals. The EPIHC website (epihc.org) showcases signatory resources to the EPIHC community, and learning events are being organized to strengthen ethical behaviors in the sector.

EpiHC is designed as a public good, and every EpiHC signatory joins a global cohort committed to operating in ways that promote ethical conduct.

5. My organization already conducts business in an ethical manner – why join EpiHC?

EpiHC provides access to best practices from around the globe. It also enables signatories to raise awareness about the ethical provision of healthcare among partners, patients, and other stakeholders by building brand recognition for EpiHC through use of the logo and active participation in the EpiHC community. EpiHC encourages signatories to communicate across the platform and seek informal advice for specific ethical practice issues if they arise.

6. What are my obligations as an EpiHC signatory?

EpiHC signatories commit to align with the principles and to accept the requirements and limitations of the EpiHC Governing Provisions, a set of guidelines intended to facilitate the administration and implementation of the principles.

7. What is my financial obligation to EpiHC?

EpiHC is currently a no-fee collective action initiative.

8. What time commitment does EpiHC require of its signatories?

EpiHC requires no formal time commitment. It was intentionally designed as a voluntary commitment to encourage wide accessibility and participation among private healthcare organizations.

9. Does EpiHC offer certification or accreditation to its signatories? Are the EpiHC principles enforced?

EpiHC relies on public pledge and positive commitment – including to the “spirit” of the principles. EpiHC maintains no formal enforcement mechanisms, does not certify or accredit signatories and does not have a complaints procedure. Signatories decide for themselves how they will implement the principles. However, if the EpiHC Secretariat becomes aware of sub-standard ethical practices, it may ask organizations to leave and withdraw permission to use the logo, resources, etc. The EpiHC Secretariat is mainly an enabling and convening unit.

10. Why should I prioritize becoming an EpiHC signatory now, when my company must devote every available resource to coping with COVID-19?

A crisis such as COVID-19 forces healthcare professionals and their organizations to make critical decisions rapidly under stressful situations. In many cases, organizations have never encountered the issues and challenges that arise. It is paramount in such situations to be able to refer to foundational principles that ground decision-making.

11. Who created EPIHC?

The World Bank and International Finance Corporation (IFC) developed EPIHC in 2019 with extensive input from a diverse group of healthcare providers, academic ethicists, and policy experts, as well as investors and other health system stakeholders. EPIHC is now a stand-alone initiative, administered by the EPIHC Secretariat.

12. Who are EPIHC's Founding Signatories?

EPIHC's Founding Signatories are 20 leading healthcare organizations, representing a variety of actors within the private healthcare industry and operating in both developing and developed economies. These organizations endorsed EPIHC as the principles were being created and shortly thereafter. They are listed on epihc.org/about.

13. What are the Governing Provisions for EPIHC?

The Governing Provisions set out the purpose, role, and duties of the EPIHC Secretariat, its limitations, and stipulations concerning the selection, transfer, resignation, budget, and further administrative details of the Secretariat. They also detail the particulars of becoming and being a signatory, using the EPIHC logo, conditions relevant to terminating signatory status, procedures for amending the Governing Provisions and the principles, and other details of the initiative. For further information, refer to the governing provisions at epihc.org/about/governance

14. What is the EPIHC Secretariat?

The EPIHC Secretariat administers the initiative. It promotes the principles, manages the process of becoming a signatory as well as communications and publicity around EPIHC in accordance with the Governing Provisions. It also addresses procedural enquiries and manages the process of reviewing the principles and issuing proposed amendments.

15. Does EPIHC exclude any healthcare organizations?

The EPIHC Secretariat declines applications from healthcare organizations on the [World Bank Listing of Ineligible Firms & Individuals](#) or the UN Sanctions List. The Governing Provisions also outline the procedure by which a signatory shall be involuntarily terminated if the signatory is deemed unfit to participate in EPIHC. For further information, refer to the governing provisions at epihc.org/about/governance

16. How do I become an EPIHC signatory?

Sign up online at epihc.org/become-a-signatory. You will be asked to review the EPIHC Governing Provisions, and then to fill in three fields on the one-page application. Once your application is received, the Secretariat will verify the submitted information. Once reviewed, the organization will become an EPIHC signatory and will gain access to additional resources.

17. What help and resources are available to signatories in implementing the principles?

The resources showcased on epihc.org for signatories only include best practices, case studies, learning events, codes of conduct and other guidelines submitted by signatories who have already partially or fully implemented the EpiHC principles. EpiHC signatories can also turn at any time for information to the EpiHC Secretariat EPiHCTeam@ifc.org.

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