

A Summary of the Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services, Sixth Edition

The Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services (ERDs) were revised by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in June, 2018. The ERDs address two questions: “Who are we?” and “What should we do in light of who we say we are?” The ERDs are comprehensive but not exhaustive. They include basic principles and directives to be applied to concrete situations. A working knowledge of the ERDs is as essential as the technical aspects of our responsibilities. There are ethical dimensions to everything we do.

Preamble. Health care is marked by change. The ERDs reaffirm the Church’s teaching about the dignity of the human person and also provide guidance on certain moral issues in Catholic health care. The ERDs address sponsors, trustees, chaplains, administrators, physicians, health care personnel, volunteers and patients. The document was revised after consultation with bishops, theologians, sponsors, administrators, physicians, and other health care providers. The ERDs have evolved with medical advances and technology and will be revised again when new things need to be addressed.

General Introduction. The Gospels tell us that Jesus cured the sick. Jesus went further than caring for people’s physical affliction, He touched people at their deepest level and sought their physical, mental and spiritual healing. Christian love animates our health care. The dialogue between medical science and Christian faith has for its purpose the common good of all human persons. In a time of new medical discoveries, rapid technological developments and social change, what is new can be an opportunity for genuine advancement in human culture, or it can lead to policies and actions contrary to the true dignity and vocation of the human person. Since we are all created in God’s image, the human family shares in making Christ’s healing love known.

Part I: The Social Responsibility of Catholic Health Care Services.

- Promote human dignity.
- Care for the poor expressed in action.
- Work for the common good.
- Use resources wisely.
- Follow church teaching.
- Treat people justly.
- Work to make life better for the poor and weak.
- Teach colleagues to respect and follow the ERDs.

Part II: The Pastoral and Spiritual Responsibility of Catholic Health Care.

- The dignity of the human person flows from being made in God’s image.
- Care embraces the whole person – body, mind and spirit.
- Medical expertise joins with other forms of care to promote health and relieve suffering.
- Care extends to the spiritual nature of the person.
- Specially trained Spiritual Care staff address the religious and spiritual needs of patients/families and colleagues.
- Spiritual Care staff work with area clergy.
- Sacraments are provided.

Questions about the Ethical and Religious Directives can be directed to Mark.Repenshek@hshs.org 920-884-5593 or Mary.Salm@hshs.org; 920-433-8163

For a complete, printable copy of the entire document, visit: www.usccb.org, then in the search area type in “Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services, 6th edition or follow this link: <http://www.usccb.org/about/doctrine/ethical-and-religious-directives/upload/ethical-religious-directives-catholic-health-service-sixth-edition-2016-06.pdf>

A Summary of the Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services, Sixth Edition

Part III: The Professional-Patient relationship.

- Patients receive health care from a team of providers.
- Patients and staff are to respect, trust, be honest, and maintain confidentiality as we deliver excellent patient care.
- Both patient and the staff participate in the healing process.
- Patients are responsible to use resources to the best of their ability.
- Everyone is treated with dignity and respect.
- Advance Directives, consistent with moral teaching, are respected and honored.
- Patients are told about the benefits, risks, side effects, expected outcomes and cost of other options (informed consent) before starting care.
- Organ donation is supported.
- The professional – patient relationship is connected to the Catholic identity of the hospital.
- Caregivers use Catholic moral guidelines when making care plans.
- An ethics committee is available to help with questions for patients/families/colleagues.

Part IV: Issues in Care for the beginning of life.

- Catholic health care honors life from conception until natural death.
- Some forms of fertility assistance are allowed.
- Surrogate parenting is not permitted.
- Abortion and elective sterilization are not allowed.
- Compassionate care is provided to those who have had an abortion.
- Our commitment to life is seen when adequate health care is provided to mothers and their children before and after birth.

Part V: Issues in Care for the Seriously Ill and Dying.

- We face death with the confidence of faith because we were made for eternal life with God.
- We provide respect, love and support to patients who are dying and their families.
- Patients are to be kept as free of pain as possible.
- Care for the dying includes excellent pain management. The goal of administering pain medication is to treat the patient's pain.
- While we are to preserve our life and use it for God's glory, the duty to preserve it is not absolute. We may refuse life-prolonging procedures that are not beneficial or have become excessively burdensome.
- We avoid useless or burdensome technology or procedures that offer no reasonable benefit.
- We do not withdraw technology with the intent to cause death.
- We weigh benefits and burdens of treatment.
- We provide food and/or hydration unless the burdens outweigh the benefits.
- Medicine's task is to care even when it cannot cure.
- Physician-assisted suicide is not permitted.
- Euthanasia is not permitted.

Questions about the Ethical and Religious Directives can be directed to Mark.Repenshek@hshs.org 920-884-5593 or Mary.Salm@hshs.org; 920-433-8163

For a complete, printable copy of the entire document, visit: www.usccb.org, then in the search area type in "Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services, 6th edition" or follow this link: <http://www.usccb.org/about/doctrine/ethical-and-religious-directives/upload/ethical-religious-directives-catholic-health-service-sixth-edition-2016-06.pdf>

A Summary of the Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services, Sixth Edition

Part Six: Forming New Partnership with Health Care Organizations and Providers.

- New partnerships with non-Catholic providers or organizations offer HSHS opportunities to make a positive impact on the healing professions.
- Some partnerships may pose challenges to Catholic identity.
- When considering new relationships, we go through an extensive due diligence process and moral review.
- Consulting our bishop/archbishop and a professional ethicist is required when deciding about partnerships.
- Partners that associate with HSHS must respect Church teaching and honor the ERDs.

Conclusion. “Sickness speaks to us of our limitations...” We are sick due to advancing age or injury. Illness can be temporary or chronic, debilitating or terminal. Jesus taught his disciples to be compassionate especially to the sick. He said “When you hold a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind.” (Luke 14:13) These were the people Jesus healed and loved. We are to do likewise because we are Christ’s healing compassion in our part of the world. While our ministry tries to restore and preserve health, it is also “a spiritual service and a sign of the final healing that will one day bring about the new creation that is the...fruit of Jesus’ ministry and God’s love for us”.

Questions about the Ethical and Religious Directives can be directed to Mark.Repenshek@hshs.org 920-884-5593 or Mary.Salm@hshs.org; 920-433-8163

For a complete, printable copy of the entire document, visit: www.usccb.org, then in the search area type in “Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services, 6th edition or follow this link: <http://www.usccb.org/about/doctrine/ethical-and-religious-directives/upload/ethical-religious-directives-catholic-health-service-sixth-edition-2016-06.pdf>