

## **Pandemic Preparedness and Ethical Decision-Making**

Ethical issues will undoubtedly arise when planning for a possible pandemic. This document will assist you in developing a process to think through some of the main ethical issues. This document may be helpful to use as you follow the Provider Checklist for Pandemic Planning found at [www.kcercoalition.com](http://www.kcercoalition.com).

### **Ethical Issues**

Some of the issues that dialysis providers as well as local and national emergency authorities will need to discuss and make decisions about include the following:

- 1) Resource allocation:
  - a. Who type of masks and anti-viral medication will be available for staff?  
For patients?
  - b. Whose responsibility is it to ensure adequate resources are in place for dialysis patients, such as community transportation?
  - c. What would be the maximum patient to staff ratio to provide safe care?  
What staff could be cross-trained to take on additional or different from normal duties during a time of emergency?
  
- 2) Personal protection:
  - a. Are masks necessary? What type of masks? Should staff have different masks than patients? Should masks be purchased and stocked ahead of time?
  - b. What additional environmental issues need to be addressed (patient spacing, hand-washing, additional equipment needs, ventilation)?
  - c. Is anti-viral medication necessary? Should it be given as a preventive measure or as a treatment? Should it be given to staff and patients? Should anti-viral medication be purchased and stocked ahead of time?
  - d. Should patients who are sick be dialyzed at the clinic? Should they be physically separated from other patients? What precautions should be taken in waiting areas?
  
- 3) Civil liberties:
  - a. How does isolation apply to dialysis patients who require life-sustaining treatments?
  - b. How does staff decide whether to come to work or stay home to take care of loved ones who are sick?

### **Ethical Framework for Decision-making**

The framework that follows incorporates the principles of the **Accountability for Reasonableness (A4R) framework** to guide decision-making by considering the following:

- **Relevance:** establishing what issues, values, policies and evidence are relevant to the issue that confronts us. Ensuring that the relevant or legitimate decision-makers are involved in solving the dilemma.

- **Publicity:** identifying the stakeholders, their interests and values. Demonstrating transparency of decision-making through publicity of decisions.
- **Revision:** revisiting the chosen course of action (responding to appeals) when new information, values, policies or evidence come to light.
- **Enforcement:** ensuring that the first 3 conditions are met. This requires leadership and is an evaluative step to ensure the A4R process is honored.

**Key Questions to Consider When Reflecting Upon Ethical Issues:**

1. What is the ethical dilemma that needs to be solved?
2. Who is impacted? Who is accountable for the decision?
3. What are the relevant facts, values, policies, beliefs, feelings, evidence?
4. Who are the relevant stakeholders, what are their values, what are their desired outcomes?
5. What are the possible solutions? What benefit or harm does each possible solution bring to each stakeholder?
6. Which solution promotes the fairest outcome in the best interest of patient care?
7. Why is it best? When you say it out loud does it sound reasonable?
8. How confident are you that you have made an ethical decision? Does it need to be revisited?

Additional resource:

Ethical Guidelines in Pandemic Influenza,

<http://www.cdc.gov/od/science/phec/guidelinesPanFlu.htm>