



# Getting to the Good Place

## ASSESSING LOCAL PUBLIC HEALTH ETHICS CAPACITY

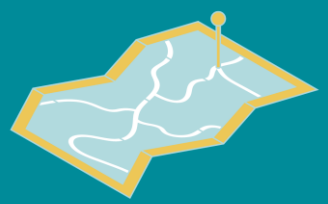
NACCHO's 2022 Local Public Health Ethics Capacity Assessment examined the current state of public health ethics practice in local health departments (LHDs). This infographic highlights the strengths and gaps the 79 LHD respondents (27% response rate) reported in the survey, including opportunities for national organizations to strengthen LHD public health ethics capacity.



### LHDs arrive at ethical dilemmas every day

As LHDs balance individual rights and a community's claims to health and safety, ethical dilemmas arise related to:

- Self-determination** (e.g., end-of-life issues, chemical dependency, school vaccine exemptions)
- Harassment** directed at LHD leaders and staff in response to public health protections
- Equity considerations** (e.g., vaccine prioritization for vulnerable populations)



### 3 Ways to Drive Local Capacity

1

#### Clarify the scope of public health ethics

By collaborating with federal agencies and national organizations to define what constitutes a public health ethical issue and sharing resources on how to identify and assess them

2

#### Support the creation of public health ethics committees

By developing resources that highlight best practices for:

- The role of an ethics committee
- Key stakeholders that should be engaged in an ethics committee
- How ethics committees deliberate cases and come to a consensus on ethical decisions

3

#### Facilitate partnerships to address ethical dilemmas

Between LHDs and other organizations, especially:

- Health care systems
- Other government departments
- Academic institutions
- Community-based organizations

### LHDs address these dilemmas informally

More than one-third of LHDs lack a formal process to identify and resolve ethical issues, but many have an informal infrastructure.



57% of LHDs consult with lawyers or other legal experts



54% of LHDs have an internal policy to address issues



36% of LHDs engage an established ethics committee

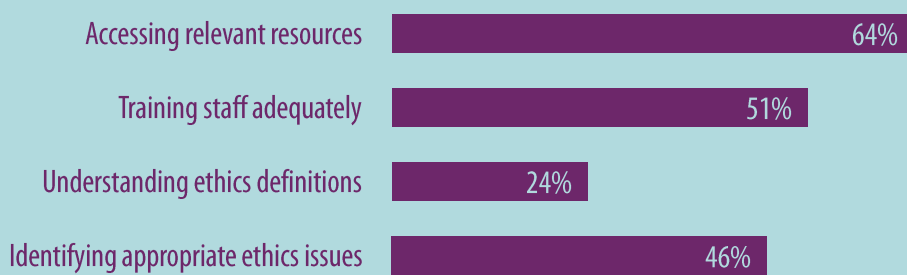
### LHDs face roadblocks to addressing dilemmas

The barriers to identifying and resolving ethical issues that arise in public health practice are varied and include:



#### Identifying public health ethics issues

Percent of LHDs



#### Resolving public health ethics issues

Percent of LHDs



### Public Health Ethics Committees: An Example

WELCOME

"Our committee provides input that contributes to the analysis and deliberation of an issue. This includes community values and perspectives, alternate courses of action, and how ethical principles might be balanced in proposed courses of action." – Fairfax County Health District, VA



#### Who do LHDs engage on a committee?

Most LHDs with an ethics committee engage their leadership and/or staff. Half of these LHDs have lawyers serving on the committee, and one-third have community members.



#### How are committee members trained?

Two-thirds of LHD committees provide training to their members, typically through self-study or facilitated deliberations /discussions of case studies.



#### How often does a committee meet?

Two-thirds of LHD committees meet on an ad hoc basis, and 17% meet quarterly.



#### Where can I learn more?

Visit [www.naccho.org/ethics](http://www.naccho.org/ethics) for NACCHO resources, and [bit.ly/PHABethics](http://bit.ly/PHABethics) to read an LHD case study.