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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Address the complete lifecycle of emergencies 2 Define the triggering events 3 Balance strong and agile decision-making with meaningful oversight 4 Fund adequately 5 Equip authorities with all relevant public health tools 6 Fulfill IHR obligations | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7 Protect human rights 8 Integrate functioning health strategies 9 Ensure flow of health data across all levels of governance 10 Safeguard health care workers 11 Enforce the rules without imposing unjust penalties 12 Promote transparency |
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10 Safeguard health care workers

Health care workers are an integral part of emergency crisis health care delivery and must be adequately protected from the direct and incidental effects of providing care at the frontlines. The duties expected of health care workers during a crisis—whether of doctors, nurses, community health workers, ambulance drivers, cleaning and receptionist staff or volunteers— must fall within their legal and regulatory scope of practice and must have regard for their competing duties: to patients, themselves, their families, colleagues and society and at large.

KEY ELEMENTS

Facilitates infection prevention and control (IPC): Specific IPC policies and protocols can prevent harm caused by health care-associated infections. At a minimum, the law should facilitate and reiterate key IPC measures for health care settings during an emergency, including the provision and instruction of appropriate personal protective equipment, hygiene and cleaning practices, reporting of health-care related infections, as well as monitoring and evaluation.

Authorizes compensation and benefits: The law should authorize officials to approve hazard pay and other enhanced benefits for health care workers, such as free medical care, daily sickness allowances, workers compensation for injuries, incapacity social security benefits, incapacity lump sum benefits to survivors' or death-in-service benefits, mental health assessments, priority testing and vaccination where available.

Enhances liability protections: Despite health care workers' best efforts, emergency care may not meet normal quality standards. The usual legal and medical standards of care expected may need to be lowered to "crisis standards of care." The law should adjust accordingly to protect health care workers and institutions from liability arising from good-faith acts or omissions when administering emergency care or new treatments.

Guarantees safety at home and in the community: [Misinformation and fear can drive some members of the public to blame health care workers for the emergency.](#) The government should specifically protect health care workers and their families from violence and harassment that can sometimes accompany a public health emergency.

ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

Does your legal framework:

- Require health care facilities to provide adequate safety measures to reduce harm from infections?
- Provide health care facilities with the means and training to protect workers?
- Allow health care workers to receive additional compensation or other benefits during an emergency?
- Protect health care workers from liability for good-faith efforts during the emergency?
- Include measures to guarantee health care workers are safe at home and in their community?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Institute of Medicine of the National Academies, [Crisis Standards of Care: A Systems Framework for Catastrophic Disaster Response](#), 2012.
- World Health Organization, [Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\) Outbreak: Rights, Roles and Responsibilities of Health Workers, including Key Considerations for Occupational Safety and Health: Interim Guidance](#), March 2020.
- World Health Organization and the International Labour Organization, [Occupational Safety and Health in Public Health Emergencies: A Manual for Protecting Health Workers and Responders](#), 2018.