

- | | | | |
|---|--|----|--|
| 1 | Address the complete lifecycle of emergencies | 7 | Protect human rights |
| 2 | Define the triggering events | 8 | Integrate functioning health strategies |
| 3 | Balance strong and agile decision-making with meaningful oversight | 9 | Ensure flow of health data across all levels of governance |
| 4 | Fund adequately | 10 | Safeguard health care workers |
| 5 | Equip authorities with all relevant public health tools | 11 | Enforce the rules without imposing unjust penalties |
| 6 | Fulfill IHR obligations | 12 | Promote transparency |

6 Fulfill IHR obligations

The International Health Regulations (IHR) form the main international legal framework for the prevention and response to international spread of disease. As a legally binding instrument, the IHR outline the rights and obligations of countries, and impact the functions and responsibilities of their national and subnational governmental structures. Countries are required to develop and maintain core public health capacities, promptly share information with the World Health Organization (WHO), and avoid unnecessary interference with international trade and traffic.

KEY ELEMENTS

Requires notification to WHO: The [IHR](#) is primarily concerned with detecting and reporting public health events that may constitute a [public health emergency of international concern](#). Under IHR, events that are unusual or unexpected, have serious public health impacts, pose a significant risk of international spread, or create a substantial risk of international trade and travel restrictions should be notified to WHO. The law should establish and support a public health surveillance system to identify and assess public health events occurring in their territory.

Establishes a National IHR Focal Point: In order to adequately report public health events and ensure a continuous flow of information between countries and WHO, IHR requires countries to establish a [National IHR Focal Point as a permanent office](#). The National IHR Focal Point is responsible for sending timely communication to WHO in line with IHR requirements, as well as disseminating information to and consolidating inputs from relevant sectors of the administration within the country.

Builds capacity of points of entry: Points of entry play a key role in containing the international spread of disease. IHR requires countries to designate points of entry and develop core capacities at each designated point of entry. The law should ensure that public health measures implemented at points of entry are commensurate with and restricted to public health risks and [avoid unnecessary interference with international traffic and trade](#). International travelers, conveyances, and their goods must be treated with respect during screening and treatment. The law should allow the government to enter bilateral or multilateral agreements with neighboring countries concerning prevention or control of international transmission of disease at ground crossings and other points of entry.

Meets other IHR obligations: Additionally, the law should fully implement other IHR obligations, including those related to the development of core capacity for surveillance and response, use of IHR health documents, public health measures applicable international travelers and conveyances, and the protection of the human rights of persons and travelers. See Figure I: Summary table of IHR obligations.

ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

Does your legal framework:

- Identify an office with the legal obligation to serve as National IHR Focal Point by providing a 24/7 communication channel with WHO?
- Require all suspect cases that are identified anywhere in the country to be reported to the National IHR Focal Point?
- Require the office to notify WHO of a potential public health emergency of international concern?
- Designate points of entry and require them to establish and maintain a public health emergency contingency plan?
- Authorize collaboration agreements with neighboring states on public health preparedness and response at points of entry?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- World Health Organization, [The National IHR Focal Point, Toolkit for Implementation in National Legislation](#), January 2009.
- Resolve to Save Lives, [COVID-19 and International Law, Quarantine of International Travelers](#), April 2020.
- Resolve to Save Lives, [Key Obligations for IHR States Parties](#), October 2020.