

Q1. As an MD and PH supporter, I perceive that the PH establishment missed aspects of the code in the pandemic: Respect, Reciprocity, transparency, Disproportionate negative impact, Active participation of community, responsiveness to Community perspectives. What would you do differently in the future?

A1. Effectiveness: In the initial response time was of essence, but the design of isolation and other environmental control measures to prevent spread of disease could have been handled better, in terms of guidance in some state, at the state level, and overall at the federal level. I think we could have made better use the solid consensus guidance for governments and institutions on ethics during pandemic response already available (due to government grant-based (such as the Pnademic Ethics Dashboard developed in a collaboration between UNC and NACCHO, authored by JC Thomas, last updated 2023: <https://pandemicethics.org/about/>)

Respect: Whether this was exercised varied quite a bit among communities. Using a one-size-fits all check across the US was insufficient for uninsured workers displaced during closures and reorganizations. Some communities and states failed to take measures to prevent transmission due to political agendas, which disrespected those at greatest risk.

Reciprocity: Using a one-size-fits all check across the US was insufficient for uninsured workers displaced during closures and reorganizations. Measures to assure food for those dependent on school feeding programs during quarantine depended on local efforts, and there was no assurance for these at the federal level or at many state levels. Efforts to assist with online access for remote school and work were again dependent on local decisions and underfunded in rural areas. These are a few lessons learned. Live check-ins for those without telemedicine access were not assured, and the initial vaccine roll-out depended on qualified individuals being able to travel to a limited number of sites, rather than the vaccine being brought to them (with rare exceptions). Also, no consistent arrangements were made to assure the safety of those already being monitored for domestic/interpersonal violence (which increased greatly during the quarantine periods).

Transparency: Again, some localities did a better job than others. We truly had changing case definitions, and the lack of concert among national officials caused confusion. Evidence-based advice from field experts was up against anyone with an opinion and quick fingers on social media. This made the information provided by federal agencies seem less transparent than it actually was, and some elected officials had financial ties to non-evidence-based suggestions they made.

Public Participation: All voices deserved to be heard, and the degree of public participation in decision-making was almost none in the early months, then varied quite a bit depending on locality.