

Summary of the Ethics Framework by Baum et al. (2007): Looking Ahead: Addressing Ethical Challenges in Public Health Practice

This short document presents an adapted summary of the framework proposed by Baum et al.¹ in 2007. The authors set out to produce a comprehensive framework for public health ethics that can “address the varied types of ethical challenges that policymakers and practitioners face in their work,” with its primary focus not on “theoretical ethical principles” but rather on “daily public health practice” (pp. 657-8). This document concludes by referring to an example of the application of this framework in practice.

Part 1 (priority) – consider the following six dimensions and related questions:

Population-level utility	Does the program generally advance the well being of those in affected communities, according to <i>their</i> conception of well being? By how much? Does the program respond to the expectations, values and needs of the community?
Evidence	Is the program’s effectiveness supported by the best available evidence?
Justice/fairness	Will the expected benefits and burdens of the program be equitably distributed in the community?
Accountability	Will the assumptions, justifications, and reasoning behind the program be made public? Within the context of this program, are the funds being used responsibly?
Cost/efficiencies	What are the costs associated with the implementation and with the maintenance of the program? Could this money be used more efficiently on another public health program?
Political feasibility	Is the program politically feasible? What is the community’s degree of acceptance of the program? Note: “Incorporating political feasibility into decisions does not, however, mean limiting options to popular ones” (p. 662).

¹ Baum, N. M., Gollust, S. E., Goold, S. D., & Jacobson, P. D. (2007). Looking ahead: Addressing ethical challenges in public health practice. *Global Health Law, Ethics, and Policy*, 35(4), 657-667. Retrieved from: <http://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/bitstream/handle/2027.42/75478/j.1748-720X.2007.00188.x.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>



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Part 2 (secondary) – consider whether there are additional issues that arise relating to three well-known principles from medical ethics:

Autonomy (individual)	Does the program limit individual liberties?
Non-maleficence	Does the program do harm to any individuals or groups?
Beneficence	Does the program improve the well being of the affected individuals?

Part 3 – Resolution of ethical issues. Respond to the following questions:

1. Are there any tensions or conflicts among the various considerations that have arisen?
2. How will you balance the tensions? Should, for example, one dimension or principle take precedence over another?
3. Is there some way that you could improve the program to resolve these tensions? Would a different program better achieve this?

Example of Baum et al.'s (2007) ethics framework applied in practice:

Haddad, L. B., Philpott-Jones, S., & Schonfeld, T. (2014). Contraception and prevention of HIV transmission: a potential conflict of public health principles. *Journal of Family Planning & Reproductive Health Care*, 41, 20-23. doi : 10.1136/jfprhc-2013-100844. Retrieved from:

<http://jfprhc.bmj.com/content/41/1/20.long#xref-ref-11-1>

