

Deliberation of the SHDHD Ethics Committee
January 23, 2020

Ethical issues may arise in health care when it involves caring for family members. Care of family members cannot be prohibited, as some situations in smaller communities require action for care, such as the only doctor in an emergency room situation. But, when possible, it is *strongly not recommended* to care for family members when providing care or assisting access to care.

The SHDHD Ethics Committee recommended that the staff member not provide navigation to health care or barrier reduction (interpretation) for family members for the following considerations:

- This allows the staff member to be family, especially since other interpretation is available through the health care provider and could be arranged easily.
- The alternate interpreter provides objective and professional care that the family member has a right to receive.
- The staff member's role in navigating clients to care would not be a conflict of interest in receiving compensation for assistance to a family member, possible lengthened visit due to the familial bond, feeling obligated to provide care because it is their job, or an unintentional decrease in objectivity and professionalism.
- The Health Department would maintain the public's trust to be treated equitably – maintaining integrity and transparency. The Health Department's goal is to connect clients to the best possible care delivered in an equitable and professional way.
- The Health Department's staff would trust that they work with an organization with a high sense of fairness and integrity.

The committee concluded that guidelines should be developed to assist with future scenarios. Even though this is not a legal issue, it is an issue of perception for all involved. Principle 3 in The Public Health Code of Ethics will also need to be addressed in the future to assure more complete understanding: "Public Health policies, programs and priorities should be developed and evaluated through processes that ensure an opportunity for input from the community members."