

**Catholic Health is a ministry of the Church.** Through the *Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services (ERDs)*, the **Church reaffirms its commitment to the ministry of health care** and the **distinctive Catholic identity of the Church's institutional health care services**.

The purpose of the **ERDs** are as follows:

- To **affirm the ethical standards** that flow from the **Church's teaching about human dignity**.
- To **provide authoritative guidance** on some specific **moral issues facing Catholic health care**.
- To **provide** professionals, patients, and families with **principles and guides for making decisions**.

These directives set some **basic parameters** as to how Catholic health care should be **delivered** and to which all are **accountable**.

### **Part I: The social responsibility of Catholic health care services**

- Catholic health care is guided by the following normative principles:
  - commitment to promoting human dignity, care for the poor, to contribute to the common good, responsible stewards of available resources, and
  - to act in communion with the Church.

Key Directives:

- 1: We are a **community of care** animated by the Gospel and respectful of the church's moral tradition.
- 2: We **act** in a manner characterized by mutual **respect among caregivers** and **serving with the compassion** of Christ.
- 3: We **distinguish ourselves by service** to and **advocacy for the marginalized and vulnerable**.
- 6: We are to **use health care resources responsibly**.
- 7: We **treat employees respectfully and justly** (non-discrimination in hiring, employee participation in decision-making, a workplace that ensures safety and well-being, just compensation and benefits; recognition of the right to organize).

### **Part II: The pastoral and spiritual responsibilities of Catholic health care**

- Catholic health care has the responsibility to treat those in need in a way that respects the human dignity and eternal destiny of all.
- Since a Catholic health care institution is a community of healing and compassion, care is not limited to the physical; it also embraces the psychological, social, and spiritual dimensions of the person.
- Hence, pastoral care is an integral part of Catholic health care.

Key Directives:

- 10: We ensure **professional preparation** and credentials for staff; address the particular **religious needs** of patients.
- 15: We address the **holistic needs** of persons.
- 10-14, 20-22: We respect **proper authorities in each religion** or Christian denomination regarding **appointments**.
- 11, 22: We maintain an **ecumenical staff** or make appropriate referrals.
- 10, 12-20: We address the **sacramental needs** of Catholics.

### **Part III: The professional-patient relationship**

- Mutual respect, trust, honesty, and confidentiality mark this relationship.
- Personal nature of care must not be lost even when a team of caregivers is involved in care.
- The dignity of the person is respected regardless of a health problem or social status, (e.g., race, creed, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, age, newborn status, handicap, or source of payment).

Key Directives

- 23: We **respect** and **protect** the inherent **dignity** of the human person.
- 24: We encourage and respect **advance directives**.
- 25: We respect choices of **surrogate decision makers**.
- 26, 27: We honor patients' right to **make treatment decisions**; we respect **informed consent**.
- 32: We respect decisions to **forgo treatment**; the distinction between ordinary or proportionate means (morally obligatory) and extraordinary or disproportionate means (morally optional).
- 33: We consider the **whole person** when deciding about therapeutic interventions.
- 34: We respect **privacy** and **confidentiality**.
- 36: We provide **compassionate and appropriate care** to victims of **sexual assault**. We cooperate with law enforcement officials; offer psychological and spiritual support; we offer "accurate medical information;" we provide treatment to prevent conception: pregnancy approach; ovulation approaches.
- 37: We are required to have an **ethics committee** or ensure some alternate form of **ethical consultation is available**.

## Part IV: Issues in care for the beginning of life

- The Church's commitment to human dignity inspires an abiding concern for the sanctity of human life from its very beginning, and to the dignity of marriage and of the marriage act by which human life is transmitted.
- The Church's defense of life encompasses the unborn and the care of women and their children during and after pregnancy.
- The unitive and procreative meanings of sexual intercourse must not be separated. Procreation is joined naturally to the marriage act. Any technique used to achieve conception by the use of gametes coming from at least one donor other than the spouses is prohibited.

### Key Directives:

- 40, 41, 52, 53: We **do not perform heterologous fertilization (AID), gestational surrogacy; homologous fertilization (AIH), IVF; contraceptive practices, direct sterilization.**
- 43: We **do provide some infertility treatments.**
- 45: We **do not provide abortions but provide compassionate care** to those who have had an abortion.
- 47: We perform (**indirect abortions**) procedures whose sole immediate purpose is to save the mother's life, where the death of embryo or fetus is foreseen but unavoidable.
- 50: We conduct a **prenatal diagnosis.**
- 53: We perform (**indirect sterilizations**) procedures that induce sterility when their direct effect is the cure or alleviation of a present, and serious pathological and a simpler treatment is not available.
- 54: We **offer prenatal diagnosis and genetic counseling** in order to promote preventive care and responsible parenthood.

## Part V: Issues in the care of the dying

- Catholic health care ministry faces death with the confidence of faith; witnesses to the belief – God has created each person for eternal life.
- A Catholic health care institution will be a community of respect, love, and support to patients and their families as they face death.
- Effective pain management is critical in the appropriate care of the dying.
- We have a duty to preserve our lives, but that duty is not absolute.
- The use of medical technologies is judged in light of the Christian meaning of life, suffering, and death.

### Key Directives:

- 55: We help **patients prepare for death**: provide necessary information for decision-making;
- 56-57: We understand that a person may **forgo extraordinary or disproportionate means of preserving life; no moral obligation to employ disproportionate or too burdensome treatments.**
- 58: We understand that there should be a **presumption in favor of providing nutrition and hydration**, including medically assisted, **as long as the benefits it provides outweigh the burdens.**
- 59: We respect the free and informed judgment of competent patient to **accept or refuse life-sustaining treatment**;
- 60: We do not provide **euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide.**
- 61: We assure appropriateness of **good pain management**, even when death may be indirectly hastened through use of analgesics.
- 63-66: We encourage appropriate use of **tissue and organ donation.**

## Part VI: Collaborative Arrangements with Other Health Care Organizations and Providers

- Preference for Roman Catholic partner when possible. New partnerships can be viewed as opportunities to witness to their religious and ethical commitments; influence the healing profession.
- Collaboration with others can pose a challenge to the dignity of persons and the common good.
- Cannot form entities to do immoral procedures. Scandal can result when partnerships are not built on common values and moral principles.
  - **Intention**: Intending, desiring or approving the wrongdoing is always morally wrong (**formal cooperation**).
  - **Action**: Participating in the wrongdoing or providing conditions for the evil to occur (**material cooperation**).
- Bishop or liaison do have discretion and the ultimate responsibility for interpreting and applying the Directives.

### Key Directives:

- 67-69, 77: We **consult with diocesan bishop** or liaison and **seek approval** or *nihil obstat* about arrangements that affect Catholic identity or reputation of the ministry.
- 70: We are **forbidden** from engaging in **immediate material cooperation** in intrinsically evil actions (e.g., IVF, abortion, euthanasia, assisted suicide, and direct sterilization). **Immediate material cooperation** with regard to partnerships would include ownership, governance, management, financial benefit, material and personnel support.
- 71: We are required to consider "**scandal**" when applying the principle (means "**an attitude or behavior which leads another to do evil.**" The scandal may often be avoided by a good explanation). May foreclose cooperation even if licit.
- 72: We are **required to periodically assess** whether the agreement is being properly observed and implemented.
- 73: We will avoid illicit cooperation at all levels of organization – our administrators nor our employees will manage, carry out, assist in carrying out, make our facilities available for, make referrals for, or **benefit from revenue generated by immoral procedures.**
- 74: We are required to be in full accord with the moral teaching and the ERDs for organizations **under our control.**
- 75: We are prohibited in any involvement in the **creation of another entity** that would be involved in the performance of immoral procedures.
- 76: Our **Catholic institution representatives on governing boards of non-Catholic organizations** should make their opposition to immoral procedures known and not give their consent to any decisions proximately connected with such procedures.