

Code of Conduct



AN INDEPENDENT GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK FOR HEALTH COMMITTEE MEMBERS
OF THE

CAPE METRO HEALTH FORUM

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



LEARNING NETWORK



Universiteit Maastricht

INTRODUCTION

Damaris Fritz

FOREWARD

The Cape Metro Health Forum is a civil-society initiative, seeking to strengthen community representation in health policy discussions, health planning and service delivery at state institutions. It is based on internationally recognised acceptance that communities should have a say in issues related to their health and the creation of a society that recognises the human rights goal of 'health for all'.

Although based on our Constitutional right to Freedom of Association, health committee members, however, address all kinds of discrimination and barriers to health access and themselves need to be beyond reproach in this regard.

As momentum gathers in South Africa, towards the attainment of the 'highest standard of health', the Cape Metro Health Forum commits itself to ensuring that its rank and file members and the executive are equally bound to the same Code of Conduct, that we expect from health practitioners in providing a high quality of health practices.

Any health committee member found wanting should be held accountable at the

In this way we ensure that all our members are abide by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa and out own Independent Code of Conduct.

Adherence to Our Basic Values

Our basic values are first and foremost based on the Constitution of South Africa.

Preamble

*“We, the people of South Africa,
Recognise the injustices of our past;
Honour those who suffered for justice and freedom in our land;
Respect those who have worked to build and develop our country; and
Believe that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in our diversity.
We therefore, through our freely elected representatives, adopt this Constitution as
the supreme law of the Republic so as to — Heal the divisions of the past and
establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental
human rights;
Lay the foundations for a democratic and open society in which government is based
on the will of the people and every citizen is equally protected by law;
Improve the quality of life of all citizens and free the potential of each person; and
Build a united and democratic South Africa able to take its rightful place as a
sovereign state in the family of nations.
May God protect our People”*

In addition, health committee members are required to undergo basic training to ensure that they do understand the national legislation that validates the existence of health committee members and the community representation role that our democracy requires, for its protection.

Secondly our values are steeped in altruism and benevolence which requires that all our health committee members understand the purpose for the existence of health committees as identified hereafter;

Code of Conduct

It is the primary responsibility of the health committee members to demonstrate a commitment to the highest standards of integrity. It requires that all persons who join a health committee and represent the Cape Metro Health Forum in public, should live up to the following values.

1. **Altruism:** community members cannot be charged even a minimum fee for services rendered by health committee members. The work done by health committee members are based on benevolence and service to our communities, with the intention of realising a gradual improvement in access to health care and increased quality of health services.
2. **Honesty and Integrity:** Health committee members cannot be involved in any activity that can be described as dishonest or fraudulent.
3. **Equality and Non-discrimination:** Health committee members have to abide by the non-racist, non-sexist obligations of our constitution and cannot participate in actions, or lack thereof that could be perceived as discriminatory. Health committee members contribute toward the national objective of a achieving a society of full equality and do so both in their words and actions and cannot be seen to be practicing discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation or ability.
4. **Professionalism:** Health committee members demonstrate utmost professional attitude in their inter-personal interactions and refrain from sexist comments, attempts at seduction, public drunkenness or swearing or any action that can be deemed as unfit for community representation.
5. **CMHF Constitution:** Health committee members should sign off on the local health committee constitution and all its requirements for attendance, documentation, public conduct and fidelity to purpose.
6. **Optimising Resources:** Health committee membership is a position of trust. Any funds or resources for health committee activities must be use for that specific purpose. Funds and resources must be put to use in a responsible manner and without extravagance or undue risk. Re-imburement of expenses or remuneration, where applicable, must be agreed upon by the management structure and carried out in accordance with such instruction.
7. **Conflict of Interest:** Health committee members have to avoid “conflict of interest” situations. Such conflicts arise when a person is in a position of trust and using this trust, makes a decision to benefit themselves, friends, relatives or associates.
8. **Democracy and Empowerment:** In the conduct of its affairs and its relationships with stakeholders, health committee members must demonstrate a clear commitment to democratic practices and decision-making, allowing for wide-ranging consultation, partnerships and feedback.
9. **Fairness:** Health committee management is responsible for following fair practices in all its decision-making practices. In its dealings with beneficiaries and communities, all beneficiaries should be shown respect, regardless of age, gender or beliefs.

Fidelity to Purpose

Health committee members use the resources and time committed to health committee activities to promoting the CMHF public benefit purpose and not for private gain or personal objectives of any nature. Health committee members are involved in health-seeking activities;

- **At the facility;** as outlined by the National Health Act (NHA) 2003 and based on negotiation with the facility. With the National Health Act (2003), it became a statutory requirement that each health facility should have a health committee.
- **In their communities;** as community representatives seeking to advance the momentum for quality health-care for all as a basic human right.
- **At meetings and public gatherings;** with national and provincial government, partner organisations, community feedback events and health promotion activities.

The National Health Act 62 (2003) requires involvement of communities by providing for the establishment of Health Committees. **Section 42** of the National Health Act (NHA) deals with Health Committees:

Provincial legislation must at least provide for the establishment in the province in question of a committee for:

- A clinic or a group of clinics
- A community health centre; or
- A clinic and a community health centre or a group of clinics and community health centres.

Which must at least include- One or more local government councilors; One or more members of the community served by the health facility; and The head of the clinic or health centre in question.

The functions of a committee must be prescribed in the provincial legislation in question.

Any significant change of purpose must result from a formal decision to this effect, following a process of consultation which should include the management structure of the health committee and based on consultation with the community, as beneficiaries of this service.

The CMHF is established as an NPO for public benefit purpose. It implies that our actions and decisions are motivated by reasons consistent with our constitution and not for personal interest or gain.

Health Committee Constitution

The purpose of each health committee must be clearly outlined in its constitution which serves as its founding document, which should be aligned with the aims and objectives of the CMHF and as set out in the mother-body constitution.

Abiding by the constitution involves not only a duty that is owed to the CMHF but also to other members of the health committee. A health committee member, who does not abide by the constitutional obligation of the organisation and the umbrella body, reflects on the other health committee members and the broader structure. It impacts on the standing of the organisation and its ability to source funding and therefore, its sustainability. Here follows an extract from the CMHF Constitution;

“The committee is established to realise the aims and objectives as set out in the Provincial Health 2020 Plan and the National Health Act 2003.

- 1) To give recognition to the need to improve the health status of all communities that is served by the local Community Health Centre.*
- 2) To serve as a support base through the local health centre and the Sub District Health Forum.*
- 3) The Health Committee endorses the fundamental rights as entrenched in the constitution of the Republic of South Africa.*
- 4) The Health Committee supports the principles of the Alma Ata Declaration of treating the patient holistically and according to The Patient’s Right Charter and Batho Pele principles.*
- 5) The Health Committee believes that access to proper health care is a basic human right and shall ensure that all Service Providers respect and honour the dignity of every individual at all times.*
- 6) The Health Committee commits itself to partner with all service provides in a spirit of mutual cooperation with City Health, Metro District Health Services, Higher Education Institutions and cooperates.*
- 7) The Health Committee is Non-Discriminatory and A-Political.*

Point 7, above, recognises that a fundamental value of health committees should be independence and impartiality. All eligible beneficiaries, all community members affected by health inequalities or whose lives are affected by the social determinants of health, must be treated equally and fairly and without prejudice relating to their political or religious or any other beliefs.

In addition, it recognises that all persons have the right to join organisations of their choice and to form lobby groups to increase the national effort for achieving ‘health for all’. Such organisations are welcomed as partners rather than adversaries and health committee members will make pro-active efforts to network with, learn from and share information for

the benefit of the broader public. It requires that health committee members remain focused on its vision.

VISION: *To improve the quality of life to the community by assisting and empowering them to have a say in the decision-making process and all other developments of health services in the area.*

MISSION:

- 1) *To contribute towards the process of transformation in Primary Health Care by ensuring Community Participation*
- 2) *To identify community Health Needs and establish strategies to reach them through a process of multi-sectoral collaboration.*
- 3) *To promote partnerships and working relationships amongst all the relevant stakeholders.*
- 4) *To promote community Based Education and inter-sectoral collaboration.*
- 5) *Empower people to exercise their rights and responsibilities and shaping Environments, Systems and Policies that are conducive to their health and wellbeing.*
- 6) *Through the establishment of effective communication channels the committee undertakes to encourage and promote the sharing of ideas, expertise, concepts, experiences and knowledge of Health Promotion.*
- 7) *Act as a line of communication between the community and services.”*

Most importantly, abiding by the constitution and its requirement for impartiality in conducting our activities, is a duty of trust that is owed to beneficiaries.

The leadership at all levels of our organisation plays a vital role in achieving this means of interaction and communication, recognising that leadership influences organisational culture.

As such, all health committee members should be concerned with promoting harmonious relationships, participate in conflict resolution while affirming the aims and objectives of the CMHF.

The constitution of the CMHF also sets out the elements of procedural governance that should be observed by the management structures of the health committees which include;

1. Period of notice for public meetings and events.
2. Prior delivery of minutes
3. A formal agenda
4. Declaration of interests
5. Quorum requirements
6. The frequency and minimum number of meetings as required by the constitution.

7. Contact details of public officers, should members of the public have a complaint about a health committee member.

The adherence to a Code of Conduct and contact details of relevant officials for disciplinary enquiry, should be displayed in a public place, in the following manner;

1. Name of health committee
2. Name and contact details of chairperson
3. Name and contact details of EXCO representative
4. The kinds of complaints that members of the public can report should be clearly spelled out e.g.

“Members of the public are welcome to contact the Chairperson, Ms. Z. Appel at 555 1111 for any compliments or complaints regarding the work, behaviour and attitudes of health committee members. We subscribe to a practice of transparency and non-discrimination and accountability for our health promotion activities. All health committee members are constitutionally bound to non-racist and non-sexist codes of practice.”

Code of Behaviour toward Children

- Any person acting inappropriately toward children through suggestion, sexual innuendo or any form of verbal or physical violence will be required to step down as a health committee member.
- Health committees have a right to inform the public should such a situation arise.
- All health committee members should treat children with affection, respect and dignity.
- Inappropriate behaviour or language will be met with firm intervention.
- A list of “ground rules” should be drawn up for all events, with the participation of the children, which will be displayed in a public area at the event.
- Children’s privacy will be respected at all times and particularly in relation to having the privacy to change their clothing, use of toilet and to sleep undisturbed, notwithstanding the intention of health committee members to support to mom’s in need of such help at health facilities.
- All health committee members act in accordance with safety and welfare of children in mind, as general adherence to good practice.

Where health committee members are in contact with children at health promoting events, they should ensure constructive relationships designed to support and encourage children toward healthy maturity and growth.

Activities should be designed to build the independence and autonomy of children and to support healthy self-esteem development.

Abiding by the Code of Conduct

CAPE METRO HEALTH FORUM

HEALTH COMMITTEE MEMBER CODE OF CONDUCT

I, _____, as a health committee representative, do hereby agree to the Code of Conduct as required by the Cape Metro Health Forum and commit to abiding to our mission of achieving a society of full equality, with specific reference to the attainment of equal access to health for all.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Chairperson: _____

Notwithstanding any internal disciplinary procedures, health committee members or members of the public have a public obligation to report any forms of abuse to the police or other bodies that have been established to address such violations.

Emergency Numbers: Cape Town

Childline: 021 461 1114

Safeline 021 638 1155

Rape Crisis 021 470 9762

Lifeline 021 461 1111

Child Protection Unit 021 592 2601

St. John's Hostel 021 231 3161

Social services 021 410 3400

Child Welfare 021 761 7130

Hospitals

- Tygerberg 021 938 4911

- Groote Schuur 021 404 9111

- Red Cross 021 685 5111

S.A Police 10111

Appendix 3: Complaint/Compliment Form

TO

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Please write your suggestion or complaint in the space provided below and place the form in one of the Complaint/Suggestion Boxes located in the facility.

If such a box does not exist or is not visible, please hand your complaint to a health committee member.

Name of Complainant: _____ Date: _____

Name of Health Facility:

Name and job position of staff member involved in incident:

1. Incident: _____

Full Details: _____

Title: (Mr. Mrs. Ms. Miss. Dr.): Please circle.

First Name:

Surname:

Contact:

Address:

Contact No.: