

# ETHICAL GUIDELINES FOR NURSES

## Overview

The Michigan Guidelines for Implementation of Crisis Standards of Care and Ethical Allocation of Scarce Medical Resources and Services During Emergencies and Disasters provides the basic planning framework for a public health emergency or disaster. For health care professionals, ethical values are essential. For nurses, incorporating ethics into daily practice is foundational. During times of scarce medical resources and services, nurses may be presented with moral conflict.

The Michigan Guidelines align closely with the ANA Code of Ethics, outlining the professional standards nurses must adhere to while caring for patients. The Code of Ethics binds professional nurses to respect the dignity of every person in their care while also upholding the public good and collective human rights.

Nurses have an ethical responsibility to compassionately treat patients, not harm, treat each patient fairly and allow patients to make their own decisions regarding care as appropriate. When instances of scarce medical resources and services occur during emergencies and disasters, nurses remain bound to abide by the ethical guidelines. Although changes in standards of care may arise if resources and services are limited, when a nurse is practicing in an unfamiliar setting, or when a nurse is caring for patients with unknown care needs, a crisis does not change ethical principles of nursing care.

Once crisis standards of care are implemented, nursing focus shifts from patient-centered care to public-focused care and saving the greatest number of lives possible. For nurses, this may present a moral conflict. As such, nurse administrators have an ethical obligation to support nurses.

## Ethical Responsibility

1. Practice with compassion and respect
2. Primary commitment is the patient
3. Patient advocacy
4. Responsible for nursing practice
5. Same duty to self as others
6. Ethical workplace environment
7. Research and inquiry
8. Collaboration with colleagues and public
9. Maintain nursing values and integrity

## [Michigan.gov/CrisisStandardsofCare](https://www.michigan.gov/CrisisStandardsofCare)

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