



## **The Israeli Public Emergency Council for the COVID-19 Crisis: Principles, objectives and manners of operation:**

The Israeli Public Emergency Council for the COVID-19 Crisis was established in December 2020.

As of now, the council has about 30 members, from the fields of medicine, science, the academia and law.

On March 1, 2022, the Council held a meeting whose purpose was to discuss changes and adjustments in its ways of conduct and objectives.

This was, among other things, in light of changes and developments that have taken place in the characteristics of the current pandemic and in the institutional conduct in response to it.

In what follows, the values, principles, and ways of conduct over which the Council members agreed at the meeting will be detailed:

### **Background:**

- The members of the Council believe that the manner of conduct of the Israeli leadership and the medical establishment in response to the COVID-19 crisis have caused harm and a serious crisis of trust among significant segments of the public, with negative consequences that might affect us for a long time to come.
- The sources of this crisis of trust are rooted, among other things, in the lack of sufficient transparency among the institutions entrusted with public health, the silencing of different scientific approaches; exclusion of experts and practitioners from decision-making processes, unprecedented and for the most part unjustified violation of basic rights such as freedom of mobility, the right to earn a living, bodily autonomy, the right to education, the right to leave and enter the country, etc.; incitement and creating divisiveness among citizens; lack of active legal and judicial supervision and inspection over the decision-making process; and the enlistment of the media in a de-legitimization and demonization campaign against entities and voices that did not align themselves with the official narrative.
- According to the position of the Council members, all these constitute a severe deviation from basic ethical principles in medicine and research and therefore necessitate the ongoing activity of the Council to advance its goals and objectives as detailed below.

### **The Council's values:**

1. Professionalism
2. Transparency
3. Commitment to the protection of human rights and civil rights
4. Commitment to ethics in medicine and in research, especially in clinical experiments involving the participation of human beings.
5. Standing strong in the face of criticism, attempts at exclusion and defamation.
6. Ongoing self-examination and willingness to admit mistakes and failures when these happen.
7. Vigilantly ensuring civil and respectful discourse with all relevant parties.
8. Council members acting as emissaries of the public, out of sincere belief in the Council's goals, voluntarily and without any financial or other compensation.





### **A foundational principle: commitment to ethics in medicine and in research:**

Council members view themselves as committed to principles of ethics in medicine and in research as outlined below. This derives from the awareness that the purpose of medicine is to improve the life of the individual, to provide the individual with information that is complete, science-based and as reliable as possible and to assist the individual in exercising choices out of free will, without pressure or coercion.

1. **Do no harm**—medicine is governed by the principle of doing no harm to the patient. This, among other things, is done with commitment to provide treatment with proven efficacy and whose potential harms are known.
2. **The rights of the person/patient over their body**—As a rule, medicine regards the adult person an autonomous entity with full freedom to make decisions regarding their own body. The physician is not a guardian of the patient and is not permitted to compel their patients, with direct or indirect coercive measures, to receive medical treatment against their will.
3. **No discrimination**—The person providing treatment must refrain from any discrimination against the patient on the basis of origin, gender, ideological affiliation or any other affiliation. Also, the person providing treatment should avoid discrimination within the context and based on the patient's exercise of their right to freely choose their preferred treatment.
4. **Insistence on research ethics**—The use of information that is substantiated, reliable, devoid of bias; attentiveness to current scientific research; avoiding external considerations, favours (direct or indirect), and personal or professional interests, in particular when conducting clinical experiments that involve human beings.
5. **The encouragement and promotion of the intellectual independence of researchers, scientists and medical professionals**—Encouraging discourse that is open, free and respectful among scientists and medical professionals; refraining from excluding and silencing different medical and scientific positions.

### **The Council's goals and objectives:**

1. Perform an ongoing and up-to-date survey of the variety of information, research, data and possible strategies and responses and bring these to the public's knowledge.
2. Hold an open scientific and professional discourse, free of bias and preconceived opinions, which provides a stage for the variety of professional opinions.
3. Take part and assist in formulating and wording guiding principles and guidelines in the relationship between the health system and individual citizens.
4. Promote health discourse that acknowledges all aspects of public health, including physical, mental and social.
5. Ensure the prevention and minimization, as much as possible, of harm to the physical and mental health and wellbeing of children, including the importance of not harming their schooling and education outside the home.
6. Work with the appropriate institutional entities to promote and ensure transparency when communicating with the public.
7. Ensure the existence of an orderly and structured process for examination and lesson learning that will ensure real-time and retrospective examination of the conduct of the government and of the heads of the health system—in order to learn from past mistakes,



to examine possibilities for improvement and to ensure a more correct and proper conduct in future medical crises.

8. To promote the accountability of position holders in order to ensure professionalism, reasonableness, trustworthiness toward citizens, and the absence of external considerations in determining their conduct and decisions.
9. To act and to call upon the judicial system (legal counselling, civil-rights movements and the courts) to return to fulfilling their role in safeguarding basic rights. This should be done, among other things, through a demand for active legal involvement in the process of making and examining decisions, through inspection and oversight, by demanding transparency from the qualified authorities, and by ensuring the proper legal checks and balances.

**General policy lines:**

- To promote its goals, as detailed above, the Council will work to expand its circle of members while ensuring, among those joining the Council, professionalism, diversity, honesty and commitment to the values of the Council.
- Given that fulfilling the goals of the Council requires broad public support, the Council will work to build its base of supporters and to have its messages heard by and principles promoted within as wide an audience as possible, while adhering to all the principles set out in this document.