

Rockhill Mennonite Community

Values and Beliefs for Health and Human Service Ministries (Developed by Mennonite Health Services Alliance)

History

Members of Mennonite-related Anabaptist churches have a strong tradition of understanding the church as a community committed to mutual aid and sharing, and doing good deeds for all, starting with the family of faith and moving into the world. Since the 16th century, Anabaptists have been known for developing programs to meet peoples' needs, including hospitals, children's homes, nursing homes, mental health services, and programs for those with developmental disabilities. Today, there are more than 180 health and human service ministries across the United States and Canada.

Identity

These health and human service ministries affiliated with the Anabaptist community are entrusted with the task of providing health care and/or human services for both the faith community and the general public. Because they have accepted a public trust, these organizations have an obligation to meet or exceed regulatory and professional standards. Because they are Christ-centered ministries affiliated with the Anabaptist community, they have an obligation to provide services in a manner that is consistent with and expressive of Anabaptist values and ethics.

Ministries of the Anabaptist community establish policies, set goals and evaluate activities in light of a particular set of values that are deeply rooted in Christian faith and Anabaptist heritage. In all that they do, these ministries strive to follow the example of Christ who healed the sick, comforted the sorrowful and welcomed the outcast.

1. Spirituality, Wholeness, and Prayer

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." Matthew 22:37.

We believe that God created us as physical, intellectual and spiritual beings. True healing can only occur if we attend to the spirit as well as the mind and body. All three are integrated in the "whole person". While we seek to maximize the physical health of individuals served, we believe that our God-given spirit cannot be contained by this physical world. When our spirit is healthy we will understand that even in the face of unavoidable suffering and death, all is not lost. We believe that a strong relationship with God can transform people and make them whole even if their body remains broken. Prayer is a means through which we touch and know the presence and power of God.

Illustrations:

- Provide a means for responding to the spiritual needs of those we serve.

- Support and encourage prayer and spiritual development as an integral component of health.
- Respond to suffering and death as a part of life.
- Place value on helping people to find hope in all situations.
- Help those we serve, their families and our staff to understand that healing is always possible even if “cure” is impossible.
- Provide spiritual support for staff.
- Maintain connections with a praying community who will commit itself to praying for those we serve.
- Respect the personal spirituality of each individual.
- Develop and provide a staff which values and respects the resources of the Christian faith and the heritage of Anabaptist/Mennonite health and human services.

2. Community, Mutuality, Accountability and Service

“To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.” 1 Corinthians 12: 7.

We believe that God has given each person gifts which are to be used for the benefit of all. We believe that God calls us to share these gifts within our communities, serving one another in the name of Christ so that the Kingdom of God may be made visible among us. We also affirm that each MHS Alliance member is uniquely gifted and called to serve. We believe that we are accountable to one another as ministries to support each other and inspire service with excellence and integrity. We believe it is important to be related to the Anabaptist community of faith locally and beyond.

Illustrations:

- Place an emphasis on incorporating those we serve into the larger community as Christ did.
- Establish connections and provide collaborative opportunities between the larger community and the ministry which will make it easier for individuals to move from one to the other without feeling lost or abandoned.
- Help those we serve to attain the highest possible levels of autonomy and input into decisions involving their care and support.
- Involve families, the local community and the faith community in the decision making process wherever possible.
- Recognize that the people we serve have something to offer the community as well as something which they need from the community.
- Establish an atmosphere that is respectful of and sensitive to the cultural customs of those we serve and their families.
- Provide opportunities for members of the community to participate in the work of caring, healing and supporting.
- Develop structures which provide for co-responsibility, accountability and communication among ministry staff.
- Collaborate with other groups and institutions in the community which are part of the health and human services continuum.

- Provide ongoing educational opportunities and resources to staff, patients/residents/clients, families and members of the community in order to develop and promote a communal commitment to the best possible healthcare and other human services.
- Provide means for the faith community to reflect upon and evaluate the work of the ministry in light of the Bible and offer feedback to the ministry's board.

3. Human Dignity and Compassion for All People

“Just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.” Matthew 25:40.

We believe that God has created human beings in God's own image and blessed each human being with an intrinsic dignity. It is only by respecting this divine image in one another and responding to one another in love that we are able to express and give life to our love for God.

Illustrations:

- Recognize the image of God in all: those we serve, staff and members of the community.
- Support and protect the dignity and equal worth of every person regardless of factors such as: race, creed, gender, national origin, age, ability, social standing, stage of life, health, or lifestyle.
- Respect the wholeness of each person (those we serve, their families and our staff) and respond with care and compassion to their physical, mental, emotional and spiritual needs.
- Protect and promote individuals' rights to pursue the services and approaches they desire, and to ensure privacy and confidentiality.
- Establish policies and practices which enhance the sense of self-worth among both our staff and those we serve.
- Establish policies that are sufficiently flexible to allow for individual circumstances, policies that are person focused rather than task focused. (Those we serve, their families and our staff should always be treated as individuals, never as “conditions.”)
- Provide means for those we serve, their families and our staff to give feedback regarding the ways in which compassion is expressed and dignity promoted within the ministry.

4. Stewardship of God's Gifts

“Think of us in this way, as servants of Christ and stewards of God's mysteries. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy.” 1Corinthians 4:1-2.

We believe that everything belongs to God and that God has called us to serve as good and just stewards of all that has been entrusted to us. We have a responsibility to care for the earth and all who live on it and to encourage and enable others to do the same.

Illustrations:

- Practice and demonstrate careful stewardship of resources.
- Consider all available resources (both human and material) when addressing problems and use those that are most appropriate first.
- Establish policies which allow decisions to be made as close to the point of service as possible.
- Recognize and esteem our staff (both paid and volunteer) as highly valued resources who deserve to be treated with respect and care.
- Examine the ways in which the Anabaptist emphasis on simple living might shape policies and practices within our ministry.
- Use Christian principles as the basis for evaluating budget priorities.
- Provide means for those we serve, their families and members of the community to identify healthcare needs that are not being met. Use Christian principles as the basis for evaluating those needs and our responsibility as a healthcare provider to address them.

5. Justice

“Let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream.” Amos 5:24.

We believe that God calls us to bring the healing waters of justice to a world that is parched and suffering. In his ministry of healing Jesus gave particular attention to the needs of the poor, the vulnerable and the marginalized, and he calls us to do the same. We believe that restoring health and wholeness and promoting just relationships within our community go hand in hand.

Illustrations:

- Work to make healthcare and other human services accessible to all who need them.
- Demonstrate a commitment to look beyond the immediate medical problem and address the larger social issues which contribute to it.
- Advocate for the needs of those who are marginalized within our healthcare and human service systems.
- Examine the ways in which the Anabaptist emphasis on mutual aid might shape policies and practices within our ministry.
- Examine our employment practices (e.g. compensation, promotion, vacation, sick leave, family leave, discipline and dismissal) in light of Christian principles of justice paying particular attention to the ways we respond to those who are most vulnerable.

6. Peace and Reconciliation

“Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.” James 3:18.

We believe that God calls us to live in peace with all people and to bring peace to those whose lives are marred by violence and discord. We believe that the truest healing can only occur in an environment that is permeated with the peace of Christ.

Illustrations:

- Establish policies which allow us to respond to violence and anger with peace and love.
- Avoid the use of coercion. Minimize the use of restraints and drugs to control behavior and minimize the use of other processes which significantly reduce or devalue the input of the person in need of care and support.
- Establish policies for responding to conflicts in a way that promotes reconciliation.
- Provide means for those we serve, their families and members of the community to make their concerns heard so that frustration and anger do not build unnecessarily.
- Provide means for staff to make their concerns heard so that frustration and anger do not build.

7. Ethical Rigor

“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.” Romans 12:2.

We believe that God calls us to work within the community of faith to discern his will in light of the revelation through Christ and the written Word. We are called to make the resources and support of the community of faith available to individuals and families as they face difficult decisions. Further, we are called to seek the highest ethical practices in all corporate activities from the board room to every department.

Illustrations:

- Consistently ask the question: what is ethical?
- Ensure that all members of our staff know and respect the fundamental values of our ministry.
- Provide a means for those we serve, their families and our staff to discern the ethical issues involved in the decisions which they face. Respect the perspectives of all who are involved in the decision making process.
- Provide education for staff, those we serve, their families and members of the community on ethical issues that are relevant to the orientation and work of the ministry.
- Regularly review our activities, policies and procedures to ensure that Anabaptist/Mennonite values are being upheld and promoted.
- Invite the faith community to participate in ongoing dialogues concerning healthcare and human service ethics.