

MEDICAL ETHICS BOARD DIOCESE OF PHOENIX

DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE

At its June 2001 General Meeting, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops approved the fourth edition of the *Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services*. To assist clergy in the pastoral exercise of their ministry, health care providers in the Diocese of Phoenix and to respond to questions that may arise with regard to the implementation of the ERDs, the Diocesan Medical Ethics Board of the Diocese of Phoenix is being established.

As noted in the Preamble of the USCCB's document, "Health care in the United States is marked by extraordinary change. Not only is there continuing change in clinical practice due to technological advances, but the health care system in the United States is being challenged by both institutional and social factors as well." With prudent concern for those who seek medical care that is consistent with the moral teaching of the Catholic Church and to help guide those who minister to the sick, this Board will be a resource for education and for the review and assessment of medical practices within the Diocese of Phoenix.

Led by the Diocesan Medical Ethics Director, members of the Diocesan Medical Ethics Board will be selected from doctors, other health care professionals and others who are educated in the Catholic Church's moral teaching on issues of health care.

The Diocesan Medical Ethics Board will have competence to assist the Bishop of the Diocese of Phoenix as follows:

1. Provide the Bishop with clinical insights and perspectives for the understanding of complex medical ethics questions, as guided by the moral teaching of the Catholic Church.

2. Develop a method of evaluating compliance with ERDs by health care providers in the Diocese of Phoenix.
3. Provide educational opportunities on the ERDs for those in pastoral ministries of the Diocese and those who are employed by health care providers.
4. Serve in a liaison capacity between the Bishop and health care providers.
5. Be a resource that health care providers can approach to assist in the development of policies and procedures that are consistent with the ERDs.
6. Provide the Bishop with timely recommendations, as medical ethical issues arise and assist in the promulgation of guideline when needed.
7. Assist in the development of resources to guide the faithful in understanding the ERDs and other relevant moral teachings of the Catholic Church, as they face the often complex decisions associated with health care issues.

The *Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services* is available on the USCCB website at: <http://www.usccb.org/bishops/directives.shtml>.

+ Thomas J. Olmsted
Bishop of Phoenix

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