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## The Public in Public Health Ethics: The Public Health Society Responds

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### THE PUBLIC IN PUBLIC HEALTH ETHICS: THE PUBLIC HEALTH SOCIETY RESPONDS

The Public Health Leadership Society (PHLS) would like to thank Lear for his thoughtful comments on the Principles of the Ethical Practice of Public Health (more commonly known as the Public Health Code of Ethics).<sup>1</sup> As the organization that led the development of the code, PHLS is pleased to respond to Lear's comments by clarifying how we arrived at the present version. The code emerged as a result of our profound respect for the rights of individuals in the communities we serve and our enduring commitment to assuring the public's health.

Development of the code was initiated and led by what is now the PHLS Standing Committee on Public Health Ethics, which consists of public health professionals from local, state, and national public health practice organizations and public health academia. These individuals were formally encouraged to develop the code during a town hall meeting attended by representatives from a broad range of stakeholders at the 2000 Annual Meeting of the American Public Health Association (APHA) in Boston, Mass. A draft code was reviewed and critiqued in May 2001 in Kansas City, Mo, by 25 public health professionals and ethicists. A revised version was presented for discussion at another town hall meeting at the 2001 Annual Meeting in Atlanta, Ga. Before the meeting, the code was published on the APHA Web site and an e-mail address was provided for public reactions and feedback. The present code reflects input and discussion from all of these forums, and the de-

velopment process was described in the Journal<sup>2</sup> and on the APHA Web site.

While PHLS went to considerable lengths to elicit feedback from a broad range of stakeholders, including the public, during the development process, it was not feasible to involve every individual or organization that might have had meaningful feedback to offer. However, PHLS has a continued commitment to providing opportunities for public comment (see <http://www.phls.org/products.htm> and <http://www.apha.org/codeofethics>). Thanks in part to the support of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, feedback continues to be collected and catalogued by PHLS, and an updating of the code is anticipated every 2 to 3 years. ■

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2. Thomas JC, Sage M, Dillenberg J, Guillory VJ. A code of ethics for public health. *Am J Public Health.* 2002;92:1057–1059.