



## What are Human Rights Principles?

The Healthcare Is a Human Right Campaign's support of any healthcare reform legislation depends on our assessment of whether the legislation satisfies human rights standards. We wish to see the human right to healthcare embodied in law.

In evaluating a specific bill, we apply the human rights principles of *universality*, *equity*, *accountability*, *transparency* and *participation*. We also assess whether the proposal treats healthcare as a public good, which is now required by Vermont statute.

**Universality** is the principle that human rights must be afforded to everyone, without exception. It is by virtue of being human, alone, that every person is entitled to human rights.

**Equity** is the principle that every person is entitled to the same ability to enjoy human rights. Healthcare resources and services must be distributed and accessed according to people's needs, not according to payment, privilege or any other factor. Disparities and discrimination in healthcare must be eliminated, as must any barriers resulting from policies or practices.

**Accountability** is the principle that mechanisms must exist to enable enforcement of human rights. It is not enough merely to recognize human rights. There must be means of holding the government accountable for failing to meet human rights standards.

**Transparency** is the principle that government must be open with regard to information and decision-making processes. People must be able to know how public institutions needed to protect human rights are managed and run.

**Participation** is the principle that government must engage people and support their participation in decisions about how their human rights are ensured.

### In other words:

1. Every person is entitled to comprehensive, quality healthcare.
2. Systemic barriers must not prevent people from accessing necessary healthcare.
3. The cost of financing the healthcare system must be shared equitably.
4. The healthcare system must be transparent in design, efficient in operation and accountable to the people it serves.
5. As a human right, a healthcare system that satisfies these principles is the responsibility of government to ensure.

### Public Good:

Healthcare is a public good, not a commodity. It must be publicly financed and administered.

Standards for assessment:

- Would the system treat healthcare as a public good that is free to all at the point of service (like K-12 education, fire services etc.)?
- Would the system ensure that people contribute financially as they are able, in an equitable manner, and that all benefit from this public good, based on their needs?
- Would the system be publicly financed and administered, so that access and services are not restricted by market forces?