

CHAPTER 251

LOCAL HEALTH OFFICIALS

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Cross-reference: See definitions in s. 250.01.

251.001 Legislative findings. The legislature finds that the provision of public health services in this state is a matter of state-wide concern.

History: 1993 a. 27.

251.01 Definitions. In this chapter:

(1) “County board of health” means a board of health for a county health department.

(2) “County health department” means a local health department that is a single county health department, a multiple county health department or a city–county health department.

(3) “County health officer” means the position of a local health officer in a county health department.

History: 1993 a. 27 ss. 196, 197, 460.

251.02 Local health department; establishment. (1) In counties with a population of less than 500,000, the county board shall establish a county health department that meets the requirements of this chapter. The county health department shall serve all areas of the county that are not served by a city health department that was established prior to January 1, 1994, or by a town or village health department established under sub. (3m). No city health department may be established after that date, but a city–county health department may be established after that date.

(2) In a county with a population of 500,000 or more, the governing body of each city or village shall establish a local health department that meets the requirements of this chapter or shall contract with the local health department of another city or village in the county to have that local health department provide services in the city or village.

(3) A county board may establish a multiple county health department in conjunction with the county board of another county.

(3m) If a county has a population of at least 100,000 but less than 500,000 and the county board of that county has, by July 1, 1985, abolished a county health commission or committee established under s. 141.10, 1991 stats., a village board in that county may continue and establish as a local board of health a village board of health that was established prior to January 1, 1994, and a town board in that county may continue and establish as a local board of health a town board of health that was established prior to January 1, 1994. A village or town that does so shall establish a local health department and elect a local health officer consistent with this chapter.

(4) No governing body of a county, city, village or town is required to use the term “local health department” to refer to a local health department that is established under this section.

History: 1993 a. 27.

251.03 Local board of health; members. (1) A local board of health shall consist of not more than 9 members. At least

3 of these members shall be persons who are not elected officials or employes of the governing body that establishes the local health department and who have a demonstrated interest or competence in the field of public health or community health. In appointing the members who are not elected officials or employes, a good faith effort shall be made to appoint a registered nurse and a physician. Members of the local board of health shall reflect the diversity of the community. A county human services board under s. 46.23 (4) may act as a county board of health if the membership of the county human services board meets the qualifications specified in this subsection and if the county human services board is authorized to act in that capacity by the county board of supervisors. If a county human services board acts in this capacity, it shall use the word “health” in its title.

(2) The chief executive officer of a city or a village shall appoint members of a local board of health, subject to confirmation by the governing body. In a county with a county executive, the county executive shall appoint members of the county board of health, subject to confirmation by the county board of supervisors. In a county without a county executive, members of the county board of health shall be appointed by the chairperson of the county board of supervisors, subject to confirmation by the county board of supervisors. The person who appoints members of the local board of health may designate certain members to be nonvoting members of the board.

(3) In establishing a city–county or multiple county health department, the relevant governing bodies shall agree on how many members of the local board of health are appointed by each governing body and how many of each governing body’s appointees shall be members who are not elected officials or employes of the governing body. The members shall be appointed as specified in sub. (2).

(4) Governing bodies of counties, cities or villages that appoint local boards of health shall specify the lengths of terms of members and shall provide for staggered terms.

(4m) Subsections (1) to (4) do not apply to a village or town that establishes a local health department under s. 251.02 (3m). In a village or town that does so, the village board or town board shall establish itself as a local board of health or appoint either wholly or partially from its own members a local board of health that consists of a suitable number of competent persons. A local board of health under this subsection shall elect a chairperson and clerk.

(5) No governing body of a county, city, village or town is required to use the term “local board of health” to refer to a local board of health that is established under this section.

History: 1993 a. 27.

251.04 Local board of health; powers and duties.

(1) A city or county board of health shall govern each local health department and assure the enforcement of state public health statutes and public health rules of the department as prescribed for a

Level I local health department. A local board of health may contract or subcontract to provide public health services. The contractor's staff shall meet the appropriate qualifications for positions in a Level I local health department.

(2) A city or county board of health shall assure that its local health department is a Level I, Level II or Level III local health department, as specified in s. 251.05 (1).

(3) A city or county board of health may adopt those regulations, for its own guidance and for the governance of the local health department, that it considers necessary to protect and improve public health. The regulations may be no less stringent than, and may not conflict with, state statutes and rules of the department.

(4) A local board of health shall report to the department as required by rule.

(5) A local board of health shall meet at least quarterly.

(6) A local board of health shall:

(a) Assess public health needs and advocate for the provision of reasonable and necessary public health services.

(b) Develop policy and provide leadership that fosters local involvement and commitment, that emphasizes public health needs and that advocates for equitable distribution of public health resources and complementary private activities commensurate with public health needs.

(7) A local board of health shall assure that measures are taken to provide an environment in which individuals can be healthy.

(8) Unless the manner of employment is otherwise provided for by ordinance, a local board of health shall employ qualified public health professionals, including a public health nurse to conduct general public health nursing programs under the direction of the local board of health and in cooperation with the department, and may employ one or more sanitarians to conduct environmental programs and other public health programs not specifically designated by statute as functions of the public health nurse. The local board of health shall coordinate the activities of any sanitarian employed by the county board. The local board of health is not required to employ different persons to perform these functions.

(9) In counties with a single county health department and either a county executive or a county administrator, the county executive or county administrator may assume the powers and duties of a local board of health under this section. If a county executive or a county administrator elects to assume those powers and duties, the local board of health shall be only a policy-making body determining the broad outlines and principles governing the administration of the county health department.

History: 1993 a. 27 ss. 261, 264, 463.

251.05 Local health department; levels of service; duties. (1) A local health department shall meet the following requirements specified in par. (a) and may, unless sub. (6) applies, meet the following requirements specified in par. (b) or (c):

(a) As a Level I local health department, at least the level of services specified in sub. (2) (a) with a local health officer who at least meets the qualifications specified in s. 251.06 (1) (a) or with a person who meets the qualifications specified in s. 251.06 (1m).

(b) As a Level II local health department, at least the level of services specified in sub. (2) (b) with a local health officer who at least meets the qualifications specified in s. 251.06 (1) (b) or with a person who meets the qualifications specified in s. 251.06 (1m).

(c) As a Level III local health department, at least the level of services specified in sub. (2) (c) with a local health officer who at least meets the qualifications specified in s. 251.06 (1) (c) or with a person who meets the qualifications specified in s. 251.06 (1m).

(2) The services to be provided by the 3 levels of local health departments are as follows:

(a) A Level I local health department shall provide at least surveillance, investigation, control and prevention of communicable

diseases, other disease prevention, health promotion and human health hazard control.

(b) A Level II local health department shall provide at least the services under par. (a) and additional services specified by the department by rule under s. 251.20 (2).

(c) A Level III local health department shall provide at least the services under par. (a) and additional services specified by the department by rule under s. 251.20 (2) and (3).

(3) A local health department shall:

(a) Regularly and systematically collect, assemble, analyze and make available information on the health of the community, including statistics on health status, community health needs and epidemiologic and other studies of health problems.

(b) Develop public health policies and procedures for the community.

(c) Involve key policymakers and the general public in determining a set of high priority public health services and assure access to these services to every member of the community.

(d) Submit data, as requested, to the local public health data system established by the department.

(4) Except as provided in sub. (6), a local health department is not required to provide the level of services that is specified in sub. (1) (b) or (c) or to have a local health officer who meets the qualifications specified in sub. (1) (b) or (c).

(5) Except as provided in sub. (6), the department may not require a local health department to provide the level of services that is specified in sub. (1) (b) or (c) or to have a local health officer who meets the qualifications specified in sub. (1) (b) or (c).

(6) A local health department may be required to provide the level of services that is specified in sub. (1) (b) or (c) if and only to the extent that these services and qualifications are funded from state and federal funds that are available and are additional to any funding available on January 1, 1994.

History: 1993 a. 27.

251.06 Local health officer; qualifications; duties. (1)

(a) 1. Except as provided in subd. 2., a local health officer of a Level I local health department shall have at least a bachelor's degree from a nursing program accredited by the national professional nursing education accrediting organization or from a nursing program accredited by the board of nursing.

2. A local health officer of a village or town health department established under s. 251.02 (3m) shall be either a physician or a registered nurse. The local health officer shall be a voting member of the local board of health and shall take an oath of office. With respect to the levels of services of a Level I local health department, as specified in s. 251.05 (2) (a), the local health officer shall be authorized to act by and be directed by the county health officer of the county specified under s. 251.02 (3m).

(b) A local health officer of a Level II local health department shall have at least 3 years of experience in a full-time position with a public health agency, including responsibility for a communicable disease prevention and control program, preferably in a supervisory or other administrative position, and at least one of the following:

1. A bachelor's degree from a nursing program accredited by the national professional nursing education accrediting organization or from a nursing program accredited by the board of nursing, either of which shall include preparation in public health nursing.

2. A bachelor's degree in public health, environmental health, the physical or biological sciences or a similar field.

(c) A local health officer of a Level III local health department shall have at least one of the following:

1. A master's degree in public health, public administration, health administration or, as defined in rules promulgated by the department, a similar field and 3 years of experience in a full-time administrative position in either a public health agency or public health work.

2. A bachelor's degree and 16 graduate semester credits towards a master's degree in public health, public administration, health administration or, as defined in rules promulgated by the department, a similar field and 5 years of experience in a full-time administrative position in either a public health agency or public health work.

3. A license to practice medicine and surgery under ch. 448 and at least one of the following:

a. Three years of experience in a full-time administrative position in either a public health agency or public health work.

b. Eligibility for certification by the American board of preventive medicine in public health or general preventive medicine.

c. A master's degree in public health, public administration, health administration or, as defined in rules promulgated by the department, a similar field.

(1m) Notwithstanding sub. (1), in a county with a county department under s. 46.23, the local health officer need not meet the requirements under sub. (1) if that county department employs at least one person who meets the requirements under sub. (1).

(2) (a) Except as provided in pars. (b) and (c), a local health officer shall be a full-time employe of a local health department.

(b) A local health officer of a county health department in a county under s. 251.02 (3m) shall be a full-time employe of the county who meets the qualifications of a local health officer of a Level I local health department.

(c) A local health officer of a local health department of a village or town established under s. 251.02 (3m) shall be one of the following:

1. An employe of the local health department of the village or town.

2. A full-time employe of a local health department other than that specified in subd. 1.

3. The local health officer under par. (b).

4. The employe of a hospital, who provides, on a full-time basis, the services under s. 251.05 (2) (a), (b) or (c).

(3) A local health officer shall:

(a) Administer the local health department in accordance with state statutes and rules.

(b) Enforce state public health statutes and rules.

(c) Enforce any regulations that the local board of health adopts and any ordinances that the relevant governing body enacts, if those regulations and ordinances are consistent with state public health statutes and rules.

(d) Administer all funds received by the local health department for public health programs.

(e) Appoint all necessary subordinate personnel, assure that they meet appropriate qualifications and have supervisory power over all subordinate personnel. Any public health nurses and sanitarians hired for the local health department shall meet any qualification requirements established in rules promulgated by the department.

(f) Investigate and supervise the sanitary conditions of all premises within the jurisdictional area of the local health department.

(g) Have access to vital records and vital statistics from the register of deeds, as specified in ch. 69.

(h) Have charge of the local health department and perform the duties prescribed by the local board of health. The local health officer shall submit an annual report of the administration of the local health department to the local board of health.

(i) Promote the spread of information as to the causes, nature and prevention of prevalent diseases, and the preservation and improvement of health.

(4) (a) Except as provided in pars. (b) and (c), a local health officer shall be appointed in the same manner as are members of a local board of health under s. 251.03 (2).

(b) In any county with a county executive that has a single county health department, the county executive shall appoint and supervise the county health officer. The appointment is subject to confirmation by the county board unless the county board, by ordinance, elects to waive confirmation or unless the appointment is made under a civil service system competitive examination procedure established under s. 59.52 (8) or ch. 63. The county health officer appointed under this paragraph is subject only to the supervision of the county executive. In a county with such a county health officer, the local board of health shall be only a policy-making body determining the broad outlines and principles governing the administration of the county health department.

(c) A local health officer of a village or town health department established under s. 251.02 (3m) shall be appointed by the local board of health.

History: 1993 a. 27 ss. 203, 209, 266, 465; 1993 a. 106; 1995 a. 201.

251.08 Jurisdiction of local health department. The jurisdiction of the local health department shall extend to the entire area represented by the governing body of the county, city, village or town that established the local health department, except that the jurisdiction of a county health department does not extend to cities, villages and towns that have local health departments. Cities, towns and villages having local health departments may by vote of their local boards of health determine to come under the jurisdiction of the county health department. No part of any expense incurred under this section by a county health department may be levied against any property within any city, village or town that has a local health department and that has not determined to come under the jurisdiction of the county health department.

History: 1993 a. 27 s. 213.

251.09 Joint services. Local health departments jointly may provide health services as agreed upon under s. 66.30, unless, notwithstanding s. 66.30, the agreement conflicts with a provision of this chapter.

History: 1993 a. 27 s. 271; Stats. 1993 s. 251.09.

251.10 County health department, how financed. The county board shall appropriate funds for the operation of a single county health department that is established under s. 251.02 (1) and determine compensation of county health department employes. The local board of health shall annually prepare a budget of the proposed expenditures of the county health department for the ensuing fiscal year.

History: 1993 a. 27.

251.11 City-county health department and multiple county health department, how financed. (1) The local board of health of every multiple county health department established under s. 251.02 (3) and of every city-county health department established under s. 251.02 (1) shall annually prepare a budget of its proposed expenditures for the ensuing fiscal year and determine the proportionate cost to each participating county and city on the basis of equalized valuation. A certified copy of the budget, which shall include a statement of the amount required from each county and city, shall be delivered to the county board of each participating county and to the mayor or city manager of each participating city. The appropriation to be made by each participating county and city shall be determined by the governing body of the county and city. No part of the cost apportioned to the county shall be levied against any property within the city.

(2) The local board of health of every multiple county health department established under s. 251.02 (3) and of every city-county health department established under s. 251.02 (1) shall, under this section, determine the compensation for the employes of multiple county health departments and city-county health departments.

History: 1993 a. 27 ss. 207, 216, 217.

251.12 City health department, how financed. The common council shall appropriate funds for the operation of a city health department that is established as specified in s. 251.02 (1) and (2).

History: 1993 a. 27.

251.125 Village health department, how financed. If a village health department is established under s. 251.02 (2) or (3m), the village board shall appropriate funds for the operation of the department.

History: 1993 a. 27.

251.127 Town health department, how financed. If a town health department is established under s. 251.02 (3m), the town board shall appropriate funds for the operation of the department.

History: 1993 a. 27.

251.13 City–county health department and multiple county health department, joint funds. For each multiple county or city–county health department, a joint health department fund shall be created either in the treasurer’s office where the principal office of the health department is located or in the office of the city treasurer of a city within the health department’s jurisdiction, as determined by the local board of health. The treasurer of each county and city participating in the health department shall annually pay or cause to be paid into the fund the share of the county or city. This fund shall be expended by the treasurer in whose office the fund is kept in the manner prescribed by the local board of health pursuant to properly authenticated vouchers of the health department signed by the local health officer.

History: 1993 a. 27 s. 218.

251.135 Publication and effective date of orders and regulations. The orders and regulations of a local board of health shall be published as a class I notice, under ch. 985, and shall take effect immediately after publication. No local board of health is required to use the term “regulation” to refer to a regulation that is published under this section.

History: 1993 a. 27 s. 211; Stats. 1993 s. 251.135.

251.14 Gifts. A local board of health may receive gifts and donations for the purpose of carrying out the provisions of this chapter.

History: 1993 a. 27 s. 215.

251.15 Withdrawal of counties and cities. (1) After establishing a multiple county health department under s. 251.02 (3), any participating county board may withdraw by giving written notice to its county board of health and the county boards of all other participating counties.

(2) A city that had established a local health department prior to deciding to participate in a city–county health department established under s. 251.02 (1) may withdraw from the city–county health department if the common council of the city gives written notice to the county board of the participating county.

(3) The notice under sub. (1) or (2) shall be given at least one year prior to commencement of the fiscal year at which the withdrawal takes effect. Whenever the withdrawal of any county or city from a city–county or multiple county health department takes effect, all provisions of law relating to local boards of health and local health officers shall immediately become applicable within the county or city.

History: 1993 a. 27 s. 220.

251.16 Local health department; evidence. The reports and employes of a local health department are subject to s. 970.03 (12) (b).

History: 1979 c. 221; 1985 a. 267 s. 3; 1993 a. 27 s. 221; Stats. 1993 s. 251.16.

251.20 Rule making. The department shall promulgate rules that specify all of the following:

(1) Required services for each of Levels I, II and III local health departments under s. 251.05 (2).

(2) Additional required services for Level II local health departments under s. 251.05 (2) (b), including services that address at least one of the objectives from each section of healthier people in Wisconsin: a public health agenda for the year 2,000, published by the department in February 1990. The initial rules concerning these services shall correspond to the objectives set forth in each section of that document.

(3) Additional required services for Level III local health departments under s. 251.05 (2) (c), including services that address at least 3 of the objectives from each section of healthier people in Wisconsin: a public health agenda for the year 2,000, published by the department in February 1990. The initial rules concerning these services shall correspond to the objectives set forth in each section of that document.

History: 1993 a. 27.