



Working with the Iowa Department of Public Health

DEFINING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE LOCAL BOARD OF HEALTH AND THE IOWA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

The Iowa Department of Public Health provides general supervision of the state's public health. The department and local boards of health have both a contractual and statutory (outlined in law) relationship. Iowa law authorizes local boards of health and defines their responsibilities. The department provides funding to local boards of health through a variety of contractual agreements; these agreements often stipulate reporting requirements. Local boards of health are autonomous in some areas, as Iowa is a home-rule state. There are times, though, when the local board will seek state approval for some activities. Ultimately, local boards of health are responsible to their constituents in matters of public health.

Technical assistance and consultation are available from the department as described below.

The Iowa Department of Public Health:

- Provides information, consultation, and support to local boards of health regarding board of health roles and responsibilities, essential public health services, and significant public health issues.
- Contracts with local boards of health to assure the delivery of the core public health functions and essential public health services.
- Provides technical assistance to local boards of health as they update and submit community health needs assessments and health improvement plans.
- Supports the continued development of local public health systems, including performance-based contracting, meeting public health standards, and quality improvement and assurance.

A summary of some of the more specific areas of technical assistance include the following programs:

LOCAL PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES

Regional community health consultants are departmental staff who reside in the region and work at the local level. The consultants assist local boards of health and local public health staff to strengthen skills in the delivery of public health services through:

- Educating the local boards of health regarding their role and responsibilities;
- Orienting new public health directors to assure that public health partners have adequate skills and resources necessary to deliver essential public health services;
- Acting as a catalyst for sharing best practices among local boards of health, local public health agencies, and the Iowa Department of Public Health that are related to health planning and policy development efforts.

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Technical assistance for environmental health issues is available through department staff in the Division of Environmental Health. The Division of Environmental Health partners with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS), the State Hygienic Laboratory (SHL) and the Iowa Department of Inspections and Appeals (DIA). These agencies have oversight for different environmental health services.

Local boards of health have specific duties outlined in law regarding environmental health. Iowa Code 455B.172 states that the local board of health is the administrative authority for on-site waste water systems (Iowa Administrative Code 567 – Chapter 69) and nonpublic (private) water wells (Iowa Administrative Code 567 – Chapter 49). This requires the local board of health to adopt standards and enforce those standards within its jurisdiction.

Iowa Code and Iowa Administrative Code requirements place additional responsibilities on local boards of health. These include:

- 1) Iowa Code 351 “Dogs and Other Animals”
- 2) Iowa Administrative Code 21 – Chapter 61 “Dead Animal Disposal”
- 3) Iowa Administrative Code 567 – Chapter 68 “Commercial Septic Tank Cleaners”

Finally, local boards of health commonly have oversight for programs including, but not limited to, the grants to counties program (private water well program), lead poisoning prevention, public health nuisances, food establishment inspections, swimming pool and spa inspections, tattoo establishment

inspections, tanning bed inspections, and time of transfer (real estate) inspections for onsite waste water systems.

INFECTIOUS AND REPORTABLE DISEASES

The Iowa Department of Public Health provides technical assistance in the area of infectious and reportable diseases through the Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology (CADE) and a team of regional epidemiologists. The regional epidemiologists reside in the region and work at the local level. Staff members are available for consults with local boards of health, local health departments, nurses, physicians, and the public. CADE conducts surveillance on reportable diseases and unusual disease activity. Surveillance is done to identify cases of disease and intervene to prevent more cases from occurring. In the event of an outbreak in your jurisdiction, technical assistance will be provided to assist in the effective handling of the outbreak. There are several fact sheets available on the department's website describing Iowa's reportable diseases, infectious diseases, disease trends, and the local and state level response to an outbreak.

To learn more about the Iowa Department of Public Health or to request technical assistance in one of the areas listed or beyond, call 515-281-7689 or visit the department's website at <http://www.idph.state.ia.us/> .