

Vermont Department of Health

Role of the Town Health Officer



Guidance • Support • Prevention • Protection

July 2008

Local Board of Health

- The Local Board of Health is comprised of the Town Health Officer and the Selectboard (§ 604).
- The Town Health Officer acts as secretary & executive officer of the Local Board of Health (§ 605).

Powers of the Local Board of Health

“A local board of health may make and enforce rules and regulations...relating to the prevention, removal, or destruction of public health hazards and the mitigation of public health risks, provided that such rules and regulations have been approved by the Commissioner.” (§ 613 (a))

Vermont Statutes that Grant the Local Board of Health its Authority

- Title 18: Health PART I, State and Local Health Agencies, Chapter 3:

STATE BOARD OF HEALTH

<http://www.leg.state.vt.us/statutes/fullchapter.cfm?Title=18&Chapter=003>

- Title 18: Health PART I, State and Local Health Agencies, Chapter 11

LOCAL HEALTH OFFICIALS

<http://www.leg.state.vt.us/statutes/fullchapter.cfm?Title=18&Chapter=011>

Town Health Officer Appointments

- A Town Health Officer is appointed by the Commissioner of Health at the recommendation of the Select board (§ 601)
- The Commissioner of Health may also appoint one or more deputy Town Health Officers (§ 601)
- Town Health Officers serve for three years or until a successor is appointed (§ 605)

Duties of Town Health Officers

- Investigate conditions that may be a public health hazard
- Enforce the provisions of Title 18
- Prevent, remove, or destroy any public health hazard in accordance with Title 18
- Take steps necessary to enforce all health orders

Source: § 602a (a)



Other Town Health Officer Duties

Report to the Vermont Department of Health any violation or public health hazard/risk —

“...that involves a...food or lodging establishment, or any other matter regulated by department rule...”.
(§ 602a.(b))

Examples of Town Health Officer Responses —

- Complaints of failing sewage systems that may affect the public's health
- Rental housing complaints
- Complaints of animal cruelty & animal bites
- Closing swimming areas that may be a public health threat
- Local compliance with Vermont's Lead Law



Resources for Town Health Officers

- May call upon sheriffs, constables and police officers to assist in enforcement issues
- May call upon state health officials for technical or other assistance



Town Health Officer Actions

Actions taken by Town Health Officers shall be considered to be actions taken by state employees for the purposes of Chapter 29 of Title 3 & Chapter 189 of Title 12 if such actions occurred within the scope of such person's duties. (§ 624)

Conclusion

- Town Health Officers and the Selectboard, who comprise the Local Board of Health, play an essential role in enforcing the Vermont Statute, Title 18, related to Health.
- It is through their efforts that we are able to maintain a safe and healthy environment in our communities.

Thanks!

