



Responsibilities of Board Members

These expectations may be adapted to reflect your board's actual expectations of its members. Your board can adopt any of these and add others as needed. What is important is that all board members know what is expected of them.

Specific expectations of board of health members:

Assess

- Educate yourself on your community and its public health status. As a county resident, you are in an excellent position to know your community's problems and needs.
- Educate yourself on your board and local department's history, goals, achievements, and current situation.

Develop Policy

- Review statutes, administrative rules and local policies.
- Attend board meetings regularly and promptly.
- Review all meeting materials in advance of meeting.
- Do assigned work between meetings.
- Participate fully in open, constructive dialogue regarding local public health both in and out of meetings.
- Ask critical questions; seek clarity and implications of decisions before voting.
- Function as a policy-maker not as an administrator.
- Link the community and the local health department.
- Represent a broad cross-section of the community to the board.
- Represent public health to the community.
- Speak for the board only when delegated to do so.
- Actively participate in political activities at local, state, and national level concerning local public health.

Assure

- Keep decision-making at the primary and secondary policy levels.
- Stand behind decisions of the board and its director/health officer.
- Inform the community of public health financial backing.
- Anticipate trends likely to affect the local health department.



Board Evaluation

Boards need to rate their own performance. Did the board set a long-range work plan? How well did it do in accomplishing its objectives? What did the board do that was not listed as a target? What remains to be done? What is the new work plan?

Boards should also assess the meeting evaluations from the past year. What are common problems? Where has improvement been made? What goals should be set for next year?

How long should a person serve on a local board of health? Board members need to address this question; each board must find its own answer. Individually, members should ask themselves certain simple, but searching, questions about their continued involvement:

1. Am I still interested?
2. Do I participate actively and responsibly in board matters?
3. Do I attend the regularly scheduled board meetings?
4. Do I have confidence in the board, the administrator, and the health department staff?
5. Is my service on the board at least as satisfying and rewarding as any other service to which I might devote similar time and effort?

Boards, as a whole, need to consider how length of tenure influences board effectiveness.

Director/Health Officer Evaluation

Although not required in statute, some Boards of Health may have it written in their local policy that they are responsible for the evaluation of the city or county Health Officer. If such a policy or language is present the following may be "good business practice" to consider.

The director/health officer's job is to make the board's policies come live. Therefore, evaluating the director/health officer is also evaluating the local department and the state of public health in your agency's jurisdiction. The city/county hires the director/health officer (often times with input or board of health involvement) to run the health department



and to achieve its public health goals. While the board should be clear about what results it wants to see in the community, it should not direct the director/health officer's day-to-day management of the local department.

Performance-based evaluation is an excellent way for boards to evaluate a director/health officer and to evaluate themselves. Such evaluations allow individuals and organizations to see how well responsibilities are being fulfilled. The board should look at each statement in the job description and indicate how the director/health officer fulfills that expectation. It is unfair to judge or rate a director/health officer on things that are not included in his or her job description. (The same goes for the board when it is evaluating itself.) Additionally, the board needs to state clearly its standard of performance for each evaluation item. A review of this type may reveal that job descriptions need to be created or updated.

Compare the director/health officer's job description and work plan to his or her accomplishments. Stick to the direct evidence and be clear about what is to be evaluated. If the board, in the absence of policy prohibiting such activities, disapproves of certain methods used to complete a task, the board has identified a policy need, not a director/health officer failing. Boards must look at outcomes of staff work, not at how staff does its work. If your county requires a standard evaluation that is not performance based, consider also evaluating your director/health officer by the performance method. Standardized forms are appropriate for most evaluation situations but may be inadequate or inappropriate for a board's evaluation of its director/health officer. Standard forms must be general enough to apply to many positions, so they may omit important or specific aspects of more complex positions.



Several things are important to stress in evaluation:

- The evaluation must correlate to the actual job.
- Specific definitions of "Superior," "Average," "Acceptable," etc., must be agreed on before the evaluation.
- Schedule the evaluation activities into the board agenda over the year.
- Summarize the evaluation in writing and provide an opportunity for the director to record his or her comments.
- Stick to job performance, not personal characteristics.

Additional responsibilities of a president or chairperson of a board of health:

- Chair all meetings.
- Facilitate discussion and decision making.
- Work with director/health officer to set agenda for meetings.
- Counsel and consult with the director/health officer.
- Speak for the board as delegated by the board.
- Represent the board to other groups.
- Consult with board members who are not fulfilling their responsibilities or who are violating law, policy, or practice.
- Initiate annual evaluation of the director/health officer.
- Initiate annual evaluation of the board.

The president or chairperson of the board must exhibit leadership ability and provide direction to the director/health officer and the health department staff. How long the chairperson should serve, is best decided by the board itself. When selecting a chairperson, the board needs to look for someone who is active and concerned with the issues of the health department. The chairperson may be called on to go to county governing bodies to support health department concerns and issues. The person selected for this leadership position should be someone who has the time, energy, and savvy to work within county government to represent the concerns of the board and the health department.

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