

Highlights from "DPH: A GUIDE TO SERVING ON THE COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH"

The primary role of the County Board of Health is to assess the needs of the community, provide policy guidance, and exercise general oversight of the health department while leaving the day-to-day management operational control of the county health department to the appointing authority, the District Health Director. One of the board's most important responsibilities is reviewing and certifying the proposed budget for your county health department to the County Commission and recommending an appropriate level of county funding for your health department.

The County Board of Health has the following statutory responsibilities:

- Attend quarterly meetings (every 3 months)
- Determining the health needs and resources of the county by research and by collection, analysis, and evaluation of data pertaining to the health of the community.
- Developing, in cooperation with DPH, programs, activities and facilities responsive to the needs of the county.
- Securing compliance with the rules and regulations of the department that have local applications.
- Enforcing all laws pertaining to health; unless the responsibility for the enforcement of such laws is that of another county or state agency.

Some specific functions of the County Board of Health

- Certifies the county health department budget each year for the County Commission, including its recommendation for a specific amount of county revenues to fund the department.
- Votes on the DPH Commissioner's recommendation for District Health Director.
- Votes on any proposal by the DPH Commissioner which would change the boundaries of the Health District in which your county is grouped.
- May adopt public health rules and regulations for the county, provided those rules and regulations are not in conflict with those of DPH.
- Approves "policies and directives" which the District Health Director will Implement.

County Boards of Health play an important role in ways that are not revealed in law books. For example:

- Board members function as the eyes and ears of the community. They advise the District Health Director on specific public health needs within their community.
- Board members may suggest ideas for programs and services to meet those needs.
- Board members serve as links to local government and community resources. Public health works best in cooperation with local partners, such as hospitals, health care providers, businesses, and civic leaders.
- Board members serve as advocates promoting public health within their community.

County Boards of Health do not govern staff within the county health departments, all public health staff function under the supervision of the District Health Director as set forth by the DPH Commissioner

Board members should notify the District Health Director if an employee within your county health department approaches you with complaints about disciplinary actions, promotions, salary, or even perceived wrongdoing by public employees. Personnel issues have on occasion been brought before the Board.

One way of avoiding this situation is to ask, "Is this issue related to policy, agency direction/planning, or rules and regulations?" If not, it's likely an issue best left to the District Health Director and Human Resources Department to resolve.

O.C.G.A. § 45-9-1 states - The Georgia Department of Administrative Services (DOAS) serves as the State's risk management agency, and procures its general liability insurance. DOAS has advised the County Board of Health itself, as a legal entity separate and apart from its individual members, is not covered by the State's liability insurance. In addition, DOAS has cautioned Board members in the past that actions taken outside the scope of their authority, including interference in individual personnel matters, may result in denial of coverage.