

# Voluntary Credentialing and Accreditation Recommendations for New Hampshire Local Health Officers

NH Local Health Officials  
Standards and Workforce Competencies  
Advisory Committee

Presented by Kevin Flanagan, MPH



*Phoenix Public Health Solutions, LLC*

# Background

- This project defined the work of local health officers
- Consensus on the scope of the of local health officer roles and responsibilities was used to develop a model of desired education, experience, and preparation to base the voluntary credentialing of local health officers on
- Work of this project was linked to generally accepted national models and standards, as well as common elements in the duties and work of NH local health officers
- This lead to the development of a voluntary certification system based on accepted standards



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Source: New Hampshire MLC- 2 Local Public Agency Voluntary Credentialing and Accreditation Report

# Background

- Accreditation and credentialing of public health workers and local public health agencies has become a national movement
- Endorsed by leading public health authorities:
  - American Public Health Association
  - National Association of Local Boards of Health
  - Association of State and Territorial Health Officers
  - National Association of County and City Health Officials
  - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
  - Robert Wood Johnson Foundation



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Source: Exploring Accreditation Project, 2006

# Background

In 2007, New Hampshire received funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation under its Multi-State Learning Collaborative Project to:

***Improve the quality of public health practice by articulating workforce standards and competencies and planning for a tiered approach to credentialing/accreditation for local public health professionals and agencies***



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# Background

- New Hampshire has centralized State health authority, including appointment authority over town health officers
- State statute requires appointed health officer in every municipality (RSA Chapter 128)
- New Hampshire residency only “credential” required
- Public health at the local level has changed much since enactment of statutes that created health officer role over 100 years ago
- However, little has been done to define roles and responsibilities within current public health system



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Source: New Hampshire MLC- 2 Local Public Agency Voluntary Credentialing and Accreditation Report

# Town Health Officer Appointment

- 233 Cities and Towns
- 218 Health Officers
- Town Health Officers appointed by the Department of Health and Human Services, Director of the Division of Public Health Services
- Health Officers serve a 3 year term



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# Health Officer Appointment (continued)

- The Local Board of Health consists of the Health Officer and the local Board of Selectmen
- The only state requirement for Health Officers is that they must be a resident of the State of NH.
- ***There are no educational and experience requirements for New Hampshire Health Officers***



# Health Officer Responsibilities

- Health Officers enforce the New Hampshire public health rules and regulations
- Health Officers also serve as liaisons between the state officials and the local community on issues concerning local public health



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# Health Officer Responsibilities

## (continued)

- Health Officers inspect foster homes, day care facilities, septic systems and nuisance complaints such as garbage
- The self-inspecting communities Health Officers inspect food establishments
- Health Officers also deal with food borne and communicable disease outbreaks
- Health Officers would be involved in any issue that would impact the public health of the citizens within their communities



# Health Officer Roles during a Public Health Emergency

- The Local Health Officers' roles and responsibilities in the event of a public health emergency are:
- Work within the Incident Command System and become trained in the ICS structure.
- Assist DHHS in public education efforts, including identifying audiences and methods to disseminate educational materials.



# Infrastructure Challenges

- Inconsistency of payment for Health Officers
- Health Officers wear many “hats”
- Inconsistency of educational backgrounds
- Inconsistency of types of public health issues
- No state requirements for certification for Health Officers
- Moderate turnover of Health Officers



# Health Officer Needs

- Identified training was one of the most important services they needed
- Indicated need for support from their local Boards of Selectmen in regards to enforcement issues
- Increased training opportunities
- Increase communications between Health Officers and State agencies
- Increased use of the Internet as a means of communication for Health Officers
- Increases amount of regional trainings available to Health Officers throughout the state



# Voluntary Accreditation and Credentialing Recommendation Process

- Proposed project presented at 2007 NH Health Officers Association Conference
- Volunteers to participate in Credentialing Advisory Committee sought from body of Health Officers Association
- 22 member multi-stakeholder Local Health Officials Standards and Workforce Competencies Advisory Committee convened monthly over 10 month period



# Local Health Officials Standards and Workforce Competencies Advisory Committee Stakeholder Groups

- New Hampshire Health Officers Association
- New Hampshire Division of Public Health Services
- University of New Hampshire Department of Health Management and Policy
- Community Health Institute – John Snow Institute
- New Hampshire Public Health Networks
- New Hampshire Local Government Center
- New Hampshire Public Health Association
- Manchester Health Department
- Nashua Community Health Department
- New Hampshire Institute for Health Policy & Practice
- Town of Derry Bureau of Public Health
- Phoenix Public Health Solutions



# Voluntary Accreditation and Credentialing Recommendation Process

- Researched current public health standards and certifications
- Identified local public health agency roles, responsibilities and capacities to deliver 10 Essential Services of Public Health
- Developed voluntary credentialing standards for local health officers
- Recommended creation of formal accreditation oversight body
- Developed plan to promote voluntary local public health agency accreditation and credentialing process



# Key resources considered in this project:

*“Researched current public health standards and certifications”*

- The pertinent standards from the National Association of City and County Health Officials' ***Operational Definition of a Functional Local Health Department***
- The generally agreed upon routine ***work of NH Health Officers*** at two apparent service levels
- ***The Core Competencies for Public Health Professionals*** as adopted in 2001 by the Council of Linkages Between Academia and Public Health Practice
- ***Existing training and credentialing at the State and Federal levels*** from organizations such as the National Environmental Health Association

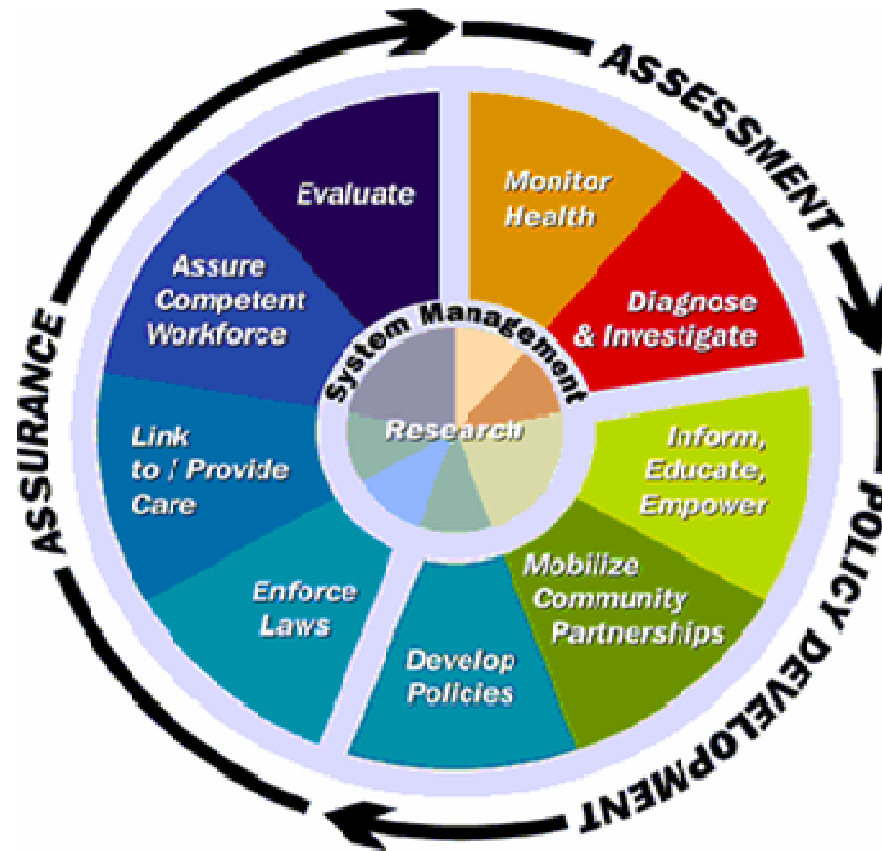


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Source: New Hampshire MLC- 2 Local Public Agency Voluntary  
Credentialing and Accreditation Report

# 10 Essential Services of Public Health

*“Identified local public health agency roles, responsibilities and capacities to deliver 10 Essential Services of Public Health”*



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# Committee Recommendations

*“Developed voluntary credentialing standards for local health officers”*

- Adoption of a model of voluntary credentials for health officers at two levels:
  - ***Certified Health Officer I***
  - ***Certified Health Officer II***



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# Voluntary Credentials - Certified Health Officer I

## Programs and Services Provided

- Child care, foster care, and other facility inspections required by State statute or regulation
- School inspections
- Nuisance investigations, including failed septic systems and housing complaints
- Assists Department of Health and Human Services commissioner in isolation and quarantine
- Participates in local and regional public health emergency planning and response
- Involved in vector borne disease prevention (e.g. EEE, WNV, Lyme Disease, etc.)
- Serves as local link to other public health services
- Serves as town representative on public health matters
- Responds to and/or provides reports to NH Department of Environmental
- Services, Department of Education, Department of Health and Human Services
- and other governmental requests for local public health information and support
- Maintains local data base and provides general information on environmentally related disease concerns

## Educational Preparation

- Associates Degree or Equivalent

## Job Related Training / Curriculum

- Core Concepts of Public Health
- Environmental Health
- Roles, Responsibilities, and Work of the Local NH Health Officer
- Incident Command System (per FEMA requirements)
- Public Health Emergency Preparedness
- NH Health Officer authority, legal responsibilities, reporting requirements and technology
- Septic system failure evaluation

## Experience

- One year as a local health officer or equivalent experience in public health

## Certification / Additional Licensing

- Local inspection of on-site sewage disposal systems as state agent may require additional certifications
- Hazmat training



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# Voluntary Credentials: Certified Health Officer II

## ADDITIONAL Programs and Services Provided

- Provides general public health advice on radon and radon remediation to jurisdiction
- Oversees and conducts local food protection program
- Conducts on-site sewage disposal plan reviews and installation inspections
- Investigation of potential environmental hazards from chemicals, asbestos, etc.
- Comprehensive environmental pest control knowledge with community education on matters such as bedbugs, cockroaches, ticks, mosquitoes, etc.
- Provides community education about lead poisoning risks
- Links constituents to other public health services (e.g. flu shot clinics, state services, etc.)
- May provide consultation to other municipalities

## Educational Preparation

- Bachelors/ Masters in Science or Masters in Public Health

## Job Related Training / Curriculum

- Core Concepts of Public Health
- Environmental Health
- Roles, Responsibilities, and Work of the Local NH Health Officer
- Incident Command System (per FEMA requirements)
- Public Health Emergency Preparedness
- NH Health Officer authority, legal responsibilities, reporting requirements and technology
- Septic system failure evaluation

## Experience

- Two years as a local health officer or environmental health specialist

## Certification / Additional Licensing

- Local inspection of on-site sewage disposal systems as state agent may require additional certifications
- Hazmat training
- Registered Environmental Health Specialist



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# Voluntary Accreditation and Credentialing Outcome Objectives:

1. Better understanding of the work of New Hampshire local health officers within the public health system
2. Targeted training and educational offerings that will enable health officers to attain recommended standards
3. Clearer career growth path for NH health officers
4. More uniform public health services provided by local health officers
5. Uniform credentials could lead to inter-municipal agreements for health officer services, reducing local costs and ensuring competency of local health agency to protect public health



# Recommendation on Oversight of Credentialing Process

- Establishment of oversight committee with varied local public health interests
- Appointed by Commissioner of NH Department of Health and Human Services
- Committee responsibilities to include:
  - Promote and facilitate attainment of voluntary credentials, and related training, by local health officers
  - Develop accreditation application process
  - Review applications and make credentialing determinations
  - Recommend recognition of health officers meeting appropriate credentials to the Commissioner of DHHS



# **Accreditation Oversight Committee Membership:**

- **Two Representative of New Hampshire Health Officer's Association**
- **Division of Public Health Services Health Officer Liaison**
- **New Hampshire State Epidemiologist or Designated Representative**
- **Representative of NH Department of Environmental Services**
- **Representative of New Hampshire Local Government Center**
- **Representative of the New Hampshire Public Health Association**
- **Representative of University of New Hampshire MPH Program**
- **Representative of Dartmouth Medical School MPH Program**
- **Four at-large members chosen by the Commissioner of NH DHHS**



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# Local Health Officials Standards and Workforce Competencies Advisory Committee Membership

- Joan H. Ascheim, MSN , Bureau Chief, NH Division of Public Health Services
- Donald F. Bent, PhD, Health Officer, Town of New London
- Rosemary M. Caron, PhD, MPH, Director MPH Program, University of New Hampshire
- Amy Cullum, MPH, MA , Community Health Institute/John Snow Institute
- Cec Curran, Health Officer, Town of Merrimack
- Wendy Dumais, Public Health Network Coordinator, Concord Hospital
- Michael Tremblay, M.S., Nashua Health Department
- Paul Etkind, PhD, Nashua Health Department
- Kevin Flanagan, Health Management Representative, NH Local Government Center
- Thom Flynn, Education & Training Coordinator, TRAIN Administrator, NH Division of Public Health Services
- Tracy Gay, JD, Policy Director, New Hampshire Public Health Association
- Louise Merchant Hannan, Health Officer Liaison, NH Division of Public Health Services
- Jaime Hoebeke, CHES, Manchester Health Department
- Dennise Horrocks, Health Officer, Town of Plaistow
- Judy Jervis, Deputy Health Officer, Town of Exeter
- Bill Oleksak, Health Officer, Town of Hudson
- Wayne Richardson, Health Officer, Town of Bedford
- Timothy Soucy, REHS, MPH, Public Health Director, Manchester Health Department
- Chuck Stata, Health Officer, Town of Groton
- Jonathan Stewart, MHA, Director, Community Health Institute
- Holly Tutko, Clinical Assistant Professor, NH Institute for Health Policy & Practice
- Neil Twitchell , Administrator, Community Public Health Development Section , NH Division of Public Health Services
- Kerran Vigroux, MPH, Director, Derry Bureau of Public Health
- **Fred Rusczek, MPH, Committee Facilitator and Principal Consultant, Phoenix Public Health Solutions**



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