

# Improving Healthy Homes Programs Through Board of Health Policy Development and Advocacy

National Healthy Homes Conference  
June 21, 2011

Jeff Neistadt, MS, RS  
Carrie Hribar, MA

# Boards of Health

- Authorized by state statutes to address public health at the local level
  - Statutes establish the governmental subunits of the state and give local governing units authority
  - Detail the activities delegated to boards of health
- 3,200 boards of health in 41 states oversee and support local health departments

# Ohio Revised Code Authorizes..

- Every city, county, or district is served by a board of health
- All boards have full governance authority
- Composition: City/County have 5 members
- Term Length: City/County serve 5 year terms. Can serve multiple terms
- Both districts and counties require one physician
- District boards are contractually determined for composition and term length

# Governing Boards of Health

74.4% of boards of health are governing:

- establish local ordinances and regulations
- approve health department budgets and expenditures, and fees for services, permits, and licenses
- hire/fire/evaluate the chief executive or health officer
- Set health department goals / Strategic plan
- Review progress toward established goals
- Levy taxes

# Polycymaking Boards of Health

46.6% of boards of health are polycymaking:

- given their authority by local governing units to set policies, goals, and priorities that guide a public health agency
- Nebraska

# Advisory Boards of Health

32.8% of boards of health are advisory:

- report to their health officer and/or county, city, or township commissions, who then act on that information to establish policies, programs, and budgets for public health operations
- Michigan and Illinois

# Board of Health Responsibilities

All boards of health have significant responsibilities for the overall health of their communities, including:

- proposing, adopting, and enforcing public health regulations
- recommending and establishing public health policies
- recommending health agency and community public health priorities
- imposing fees
- approving health agency budgets

# Board of Health Challenges

- Volunteers – unpaid professionals
- Other full time commitments
- Majority have limited to no training in public health - No statutory requirements for formal training in public health exist
- Meeting frequency = 1/month or quarterly
- Almost 70% are appointed nationally/100% in many states
- Multiple varied approaches to public health governance across the country

# Boards of Health and Environmental Health

- Eighty-one percent of boards of health are responsible for oversight of environmental health programs
- Boards of health have sole responsibility for developing policy on many environmental health issues:
  - private water wells
  - lead poisoning prevention
  - septic systems and private wastewater collection
  - nuisance regulations
  - air quality

NALBOH Repository of Local Environmental Public Health Policies ([http://www.nalboh.org/EH\\_Local\\_Policies.htm](http://www.nalboh.org/EH_Local_Policies.htm))

# Boards of Health and Public Health Functions

- Boards of health are responsible for fulfilling the three core functions of public health:
  - Assessment
  - Policy development
  - Assurance
- There are opportunities for boards of health to work in healthy homes under these three functions and 10 Essential Public Health Services

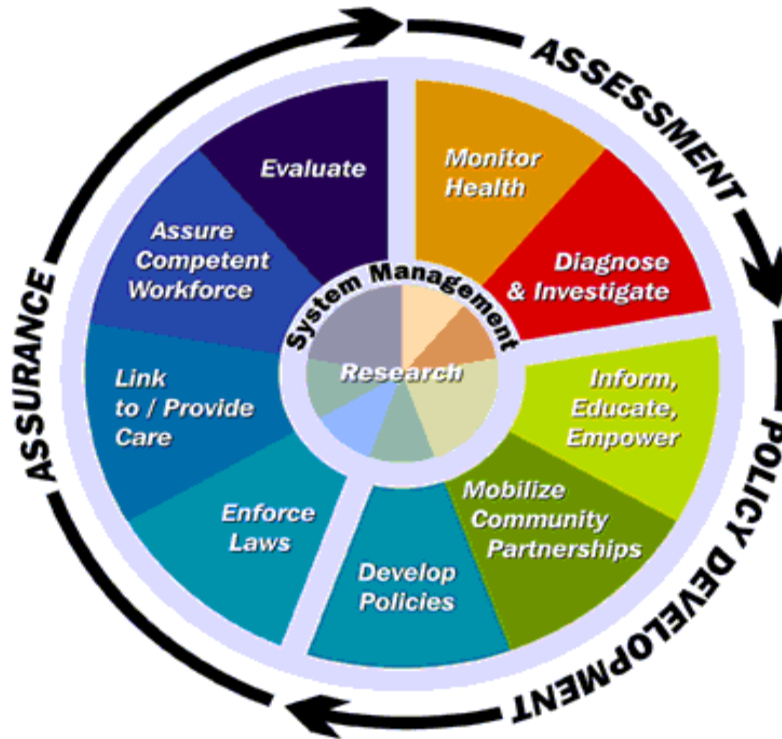
# 10 Essential Public Health Services

- Monitor health status to identify community health problems
- Diagnose and investigate health problems and health hazards
- Inform, educate, and empower people about health issues
- Mobilize community partnerships to identify and solve health problems
- Develop policies and plans that support individual and community health efforts

# 10 Essential Public Health Services

- Enforce laws and regulations that protect health and ensure safety
- Link people to needed personal health services and assure the provision of health care when otherwise unavailable
- Assure a competent public and personal health care workforce
- Evaluate effectiveness, accessibility, and quality of personal and population-based health service
- Research for new insights and innovative solutions to health problems

# “The Wheel”



# Assessment – Healthy Homes

- Boards of health can participate in a housing needs assessment, which should
  - Analyze community data
  - Assess staff training needs
  - Determine organizational capacity
  - Review existing policy
  - Examine existing or potential partnerships
  - Evaluate healthy homes programs
  - Appraise effectiveness of surveillance

# Assessment – Healthy Homes

- Use the results of the community assessment to inform a strategic plan
  - Include goals, measurable objectives, and a timeline for addressing issues
- Continue to monitor housing-related health problems
  - Surgeon General’s Call to Action to Promote Healthy Homes
    - Goal 3 – Research
      - “Develop and implement a healthy homes monitoring and tracking system”

# Policy Development – Healthy Homes

- Housing and sanitary code development and enforcement
  - HUD Healthy Homes Strategic Plan  
Goal #3: Support the Creation and Adoption of Health Protective Housing Codes and Enforcement Strategies
    - “In the absence of federal regulations governing healthy homes issues beyond lead-based paint, state and local policies will continue to be key mechanisms for change.”

# Policy Development – Healthy Homes

- Adopt model codes
  - International Code Council
    - International Property Maintenance Code
    - International Residential Code
    - International Building Code
    - International Energy Conservation Code
    - International Mechanical Code
  - Housing and Urban Development  
Minimum Property Standards

# Policy Development – Healthy Homes

- Examples of local healthy homes and/or lead hazard policies or codes:
  - Allegheny County, PA
  - Allentown Bureau of Health, PA
  - Cerro Gordo County Department of Public Health, IA
  - City of Gloucester Board of Health, MA
  - Guilford County Board of Health, NC
  - Kent County Board of Commissioners, MI

[http://www.nalboh.org/EH\\_Local\\_Policies.htm](http://www.nalboh.org/EH_Local_Policies.htm)

# Policy Enforcement – Healthy Homes

- Collaborate with other agencies responsible for code enforcement
- Systematic, not complaint-based, code enforcement
  - Catches more problems
  - Holistic, proactive, not reactive approach
  - Some people may fear reporting their housing problems
  - Ensures rental properties are inspected every few years

# Assurance – Healthy Homes

- Education campaigns about housing risks
  - “Communicate research findings to the public, health care providers, and policymakers that clearly describe behaviors and actions that promote healthy homes”
  - Surgeon General’s Call to Action to Promote Healthy Homes
- Communicate best practices – how individuals can change behavior

# Assurance – Healthy Homes

- Implementing and supporting healthy homes programming
  - Develop standard, evidence-based healthy home assessment tools and intervention protocols
  - Incorporate healthy and environmentally friendly housing into training programs for public and environmental health staff

# Assurance – Healthy Homes

- Promote safe, healthy, and environmentally friendly housing options
- Partner with other community organizations and agencies to provide services to improve the health of housing

# Advocacy – Healthy Homes

Board of health members have important role as advocates for environmental public health

- Call, write, email, or visit your Senators and Representatives to support federal funding for healthy homes and lead poisoning prevention programs
- Important first step for many boards in developing policy

# Resources

- NALBOH Environmental Health – [www.nalboh.org/Environmental\\_Health.htm](http://www.nalboh.org/Environmental_Health.htm)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Healthy Homes and Lead Poisoning Prevention Branch – *Developing a Healthy Homes Program*
- Multnomah County, OR – *Healthy Homes Policy Toolkit*
- U.S. Department of Health & Human Services – *The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Promote Healthy Homes*

# NALBOH Repository of Local Environmental Health Policies

The screenshot shows a Mozilla Firefox browser window displaying the NALBOH website. The address bar shows the URL: [http://www.nalboh.org/Local\\_Policies.htm](http://www.nalboh.org/Local_Policies.htm). The website header features the NALBOH logo and the tagline "Working to strengthen and improve public health governance". Below the header is a navigation menu with links for Home, Membership, Education & Resources, Advocacy, Events, and State Associations. The main content area is titled "Repository of Local Environmental Health Policies" and lists various policy categories such as Air Quality, Food Safety, Hazardous Waste, Lead Poisoning Prevention/Healthy Homes, Sales and Regulations - Housing and Community Environment, Lead Poisoning and Prevention Act, Lead Solenace, Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Regulation, Mobile Home Regulations, nuisance Regulations, Private Water Wells, Recreational Water, Solid Waste Collection and Recycling, Tattooing, Piercing, and Body Art Regulations, Vector Control, Wastewater Sewage, and Miscellaneous Regulations. A sidebar on the left contains a vertical menu with links for Board Governance, Community Health, Environmental Health (highlighted), Preparedness, and Publications/Videos. Below this menu is a login section with the text "Click here to login to the members only section" and a "LOGIN" button. A small advertisement for the "19th Annual Conference" is visible on the right side of the page. At the bottom of the page, there is a note: "If you have additional policies you would like included or other suggestions about the Repository, please contact Carrie Hryba".

# NALBOH's National Role

*Mission is to strengthen and improve public health governance through:*

- Education and training
- Advocacy
- Technical assistance
- State Association of Local Boards of Health Support (SALBOH)
- National opportunities for board of health members

# More Information

National Association of Local Boards of Health  
(NALBOH)

1840 East Gypsy Lane

Bowling Green, OH 43402

(419) 353-7714

[www.nalboh.org](http://www.nalboh.org)