

Board of Health

There is a county board of health in each county in the state that determines the county's health needs and resources and develops programs to meet these needs. In general, responsibility for all public health matters within the county (such as the placement of septic tanks, the abatement of public nuisances, disease prevention, vaccinations against contagious diseases, and such other matters to prevent the spread of infectious matter, and rabies control) is vested in the board of health. This responsibility includes the enforcement of health laws and regulations.

The county board of health is composed of seven members:

1. the chief executive officer of the county governing authority or some other person designated by said officer;
2. the county superintendent of schools or a school system employee designated by the superintendent;
3. a physician actively practicing medicine in the county;
4. a person appointed by the county governing authority who is a consumer or a person from an advocacy group who will represent the county's consumers of health services;
5. a person appointed by the governing authority of the largest municipality in the county who is a consumer, interested in promoting public health, or a registered professional nurse or a licensed practical nurse;
6. a person appointed by the county governing authority who is a consumer and who will represent the county's needy, underprivileged, or elderly community; and
7. the chief executive officer of the largest municipality in the county or some other person designated by said officer.

The term of members of the board of health appointed by the governing authority of either the county or largest municipality in the county are six years. Vacancies in the appointed positions are filled for the unexpired term in the same manner as the original appointment, and no employee of the state Department of Human Services or the county board of health shall be a member of the board. Members of the board are paid an amount governed by statute if funds for that purpose have been provided by the county. The board appoints a director, who must be a physician licensed to practice medicine in Georgia, to act as its chief executive officer. While the director is subject to the policies and directives of the board of health, the director is a state employee who reports to the director of environmental health of the state Department of Community Health. The director of the board may, subject to the board's approved budget, designate additional aides and assistants to carry out the responsibilities of the board. Normally, such aides and assistants are state employees.

The county governing authority is authorized to fund the reasonable expenses of the board of health through property taxes, with office facilities and equipment for the board also supplied by the county. In addition, the board receives federal and state financial assistance. To assist it in performing its duties, the board of health may utilize the services of the county attorney or employ other counsel.

With the consent of the boards of health and the county governing authorities, the Department of Community Health may establish a health district comprising one or more counties with the same powers and duties as the individual health boards. For further discussion of health and human services, see Chapter 15.

Source: ACCG Handbook for Georgia County Commissioners; Fifth Edition; 2010