



Information Sheet: Local Health Officer Qualifications Review

Introduction

This information sheet provides a description of the local health officer qualifications review process and its importance.

The Office of Policy and Practice Alignment (OPPA) works under the authority of the state health officer and utilizes a standard of practice to ensure consistency in interpretation of law, credential review, and determination of local health officer qualifications. All health officer candidates must be submitted for review and approval by the state health officer before being confirmed by the local hiring authority. There could be implications to a health department's level designation, as well as the funding, if an interim or new health officer is selected that does not meet qualifications as specified in statute. This standard of practice was initially implemented prior to 2008.

Purpose

This document provides information to local leadership about the local health officer qualifications review process. Health officers are required to administer their health department according to jurisdictional ordinances and enforce state public health statutes and associated administrative rules. The review process provides local leadership with the necessary information to make a decision that meets the intent of statute to ensure a competent public health workforce. Regional directors or their designee work with the local hiring authority during the local health officer qualifications review to ensure an effective process that results in identifying a new or interim health officer who meets the appropriate statute requirements according to the health department's level.

Background

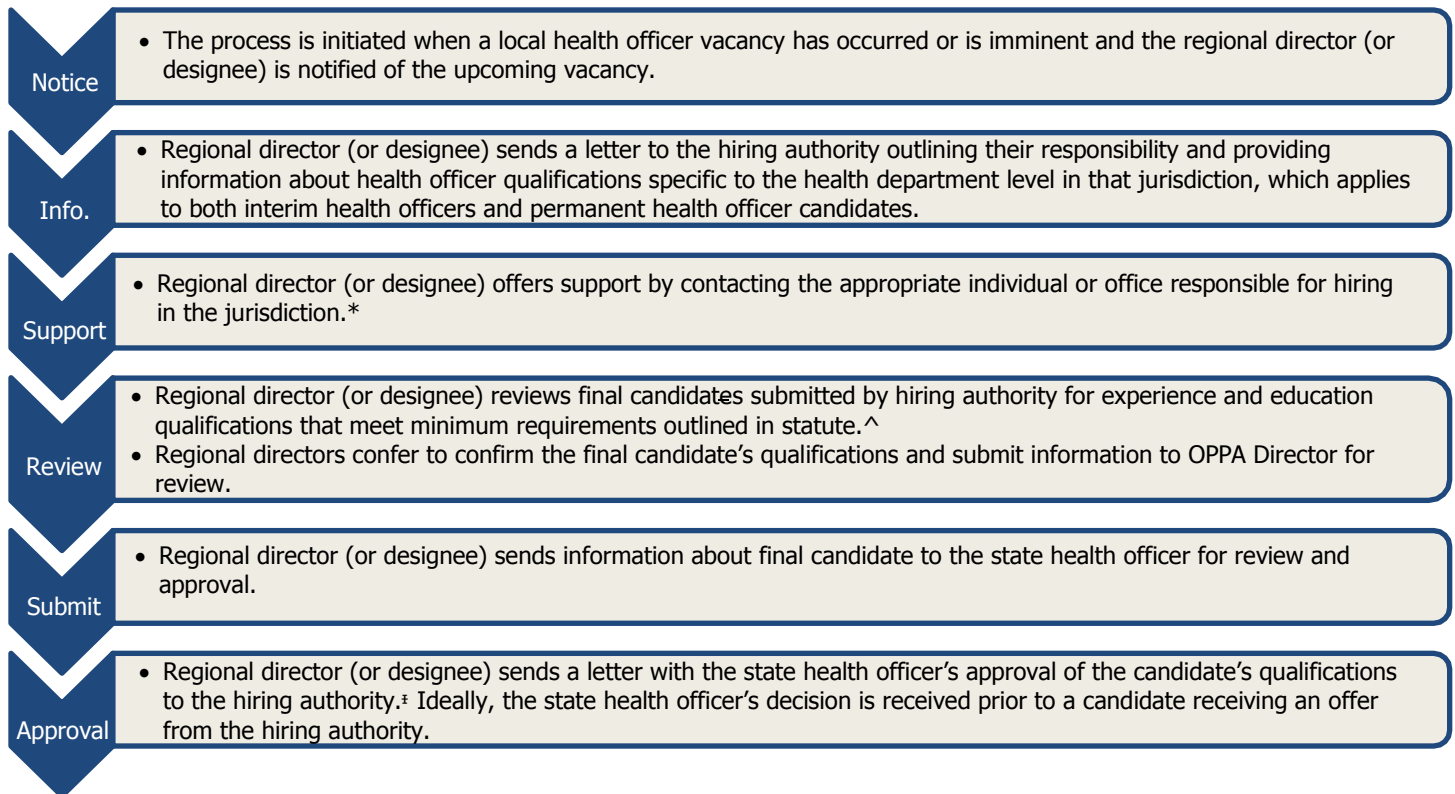
[Wisconsin Admin. Code ch. DHS 139](#)² prescribes the qualifications of public health professionals employed by local health departments. Wisconsin Admin. Code § DHS 139.05 provides specifically that, "A local health officer shall meet the appropriate qualifications under [s. 251.06](#)⁷ (1) and (2), Stats" which are promulgated in [Wis. Admin. Code ch. DHS 140](#).⁴

[Wisconsin Admin. Code § DHS 139.04](#)³ authorizes the state health officer to assure that local health officers meet the qualification standards specified in the statutes:

[DHS 139.04](#)³ General requirement.

- (1) Except as provided in sub. (2), no person may be employed or may continue to be employed by a local health department to perform the duties of a local health officer . . . unless he or she meets the qualifications set forth in this chapter. The state health officer may, on his or her own initiative or upon request, review the qualifications of persons applying for or functioning in positions described in this chapter, and may advise the employing unit whether it considers a person applying for or functioning in a position described in this chapter to be qualified or not under this chapter.
- (2) Persons employed by local health departments on December 1, 1984, are exempt from the provisions of sub. (1) with the approval of the state health officer.

Process



Every effort is made to ensure support and review requests from hiring authorities receive a response within three business days after receipt of information. The length of time for DPH to conduct the review process, once a candidate or candidates have been submitted to the regional office, depends on how clearly candidates meet statute qualifications, number of candidates submitted, capacity of regional directors (or designee) to conduct the review, and the availability of the state health officer to approve the candidate qualifications. Approval from the state health officer typically takes at least two business days. A longer process may result if candidates do not clearly meet the qualifications established in statute and the regional director (or designee) will communicate with the hiring authority to gather more information, as needed.

Process List details -

*The hiring authority may request any of the following **optional** support services provided by the Regional Director (or designee):

- Review of position description (note that new [Wisconsin Admin. Code ch. DHS 140](#)⁴ language went into effect in July 2019 and includes a requirement to include competencies in position descriptions)
- Review of and/or recommendations for interview questions
- Participation on interview panels to listen for experiences related to required qualifications
- Screening of initial candidates for qualifications
- Any combination of the above to meet local needs

^ If the documentation provided for review is unclear, the regional director may request additional information, such as transcripts from academic institutions, or encourage the hiring authority to ask specific questions during the interview process to ensure the regional director is taking all information into account during the review.

‡ A letter indicating the candidate does not meet required qualifications will be sent to the hiring authority. Ideally, the state health officer's decision is received prior to a candidate receiving an offer from the hiring authority.

Additional Considerations and Resources

1. Review hiring policies to ensure intentional outreach and recruitment efforts that expand opportunities for qualified candidates (for example, consider a range of experience, including lived experience, to select a best fit candidate for the health officer position). Statutory minimum qualifications must be followed by hiring authorities and qualifications that exceed statutory requirements can be considered.
 - **Wisconsin Counties Association (WCA)**
[WCA Past Event Materials](#)¹² – variety of resources and materials from past presentations that provide information and strategies that counties can use to embed equity in their practices. Recommendation:
 - Materials from February 2021, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusivity Series
 - [Recruiting and Retaining the Current Workforce](#)⁸ – broad focus generational and rural recruiting
 - **Government Alliance on Race and Equity**
[Racial Equity Alliance: Tools and Resource](#)¹ – variety of tools and resources to support informed and intentional change, specific to regional and local government. Recommendation:
 - [Public Sector Jobs: Opportunities for Advancing Racial Equity](#)¹¹ – information, and policy and practice strategies
 - **National League of Cities (NLC)**
[NLC Resources and Training](#)¹⁰ – variety of briefs and examples of equity in practice in city government. Recommendation:
 - [How Cities Can Embrace the LGBTQ+ Community Through Policies and Programs](#)⁹ – includes a section on strategies governing bodies to consider as an employer.
2. Do not automatically rule out candidates that do not have a specific degree listed in statute; the standard of practice includes review of other fields of academic study to determine if they are already considered a “similar field” or if they could be considered a “similar field.”
 - Definition. In this section, “similar field” means a field of academic study, or combination of graduate-level courses that the state health officer determines provides the knowledge and skills required to adequately meet the responsibilities of a level I, II, or III local health officer. ([Wis. Admin. Code § DHS 140.07 \(1\)](#))⁵

Contact Information

Regional director contact information is available on the Wisconsin Department of Health Services website [Division of Public Health Regional Information](#).¹³ If there is a regional director vacancy in your region, you can contact any regional director to notify them of a vacancy, request support, and request review of qualifications.

Regulatory Reference

Wisconsin State Statutes –

- [Chapter 250](#)⁶
- [§ 251.05](#)⁷
- [§ 251.06](#)⁷

Wisconsin Administrative Code –

- [Chapter DHS 139](#)²
- [Chapter DHS 140](#)⁴

References

- ¹Bernabei, E. (n.d.) *Tools & resources*. Local and Regional Government Alliance on Race & Equity. <https://www.racialequityalliance.org/tools-resources/>
- ²Chapter DHS 139, Qualifications of Public Health Professionals Employed By Local Health Departments, Wis. Admin. Code ch. DHS 139. https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/code/admin_code/dhs/110/139
- ³Chapter DHS 139, Qualifications of Public Health Professionals Employed By Local Health Departments, Wis. Admin. Code ch. DHS 139.04. https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/code/admin_code/dhs/110/139/04
- ⁴Chapter DHS 140, Required Services of Local Health Departments, Wis. Admin. Code ch. DHS 140. https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/code/admin_code/dhs/110/140
- ⁵Chapter DHS 140, Required Services of Local Health Departments, Wis. Admin. Code ch. DHS 140.07. https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/code/admin_code/dhs/110/140/07
- ⁶Chapter DHS 250, Health; Administration and Supervision, Wis. Stat. § 250. <https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/statutes/statutes/250>
- ⁷Chapter DHS 251, Health; Local Health Officials, Wis. Stat. §§ 251.05 and 251.06. <https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/statutes/statutes/251>
- ⁸Deschane, R. (2021). *Recruiting and retaining the current workforce*. New North, Inc. Retrieved from <https://www.wicounties.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/REDUCED-1030-Recruiting-and-Retaining-the-Current-Workforce.pdf>
- ⁹National League of Cities (NLC). (n.d.) *How cities can embrace the LGBTQ+ community through policies and programs*. National League of Cities (NLC). https://www.nlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/LGBTQ_LO-POLICY-BRIEF-1.pdf
- ¹⁰National League of Cities (NLC). (n.d.) *Resources & training*. National League of Cities (NLC). <https://www.nlc.org/resources-training/>
- ¹¹Nelson, J., Tyrell, S. (n.d.) *Public sector jobs: Opportunities for advancing racial equity*. Local and Regional Government Alliance on Race & Equity. Retrieved from <https://racialequityalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Public-Sector-Jobs-Final1.pdf>
- ¹²Wisconsin Counties Association (WCA). (n.d.) *Past event materials*. Wisconsin Counties Association (WCA). Retrieved from <https://www.wicounties.org/past-event-materials/>
- ¹³Wisconsin Department of Health Services, Division of Public Health Regional Information. <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/dph/regions.htm>