

Colorado

State Board of Health

Powers and Duties

The primary duties of the nine-member State Board of Health, established by state law, are to adopt or revise standards, rules and regulations to administer the public health laws of the state; to determine general policies to be followed in administering and enforcing the public health laws, standards, rules and regulations; to act in an advisory capacity to the executive director of the department on matters pertaining to public health; to establish and appoint special advisory committees when necessary to advise and confer with the board concerning the public health aspects of any business, profession or industry within the state; to monitor the operation and effectiveness of tobacco settlement programs that receive appropriations from moneys received by the state pursuant to the master settlement agreement; to approve grants for tobacco education, prevention and cessation programs; to approve grants for cancer, cardiovascular disease and chronic pulmonary disease programs, including those in underrepresented populations; to approve grants for nurse home visitor programs; and to approve grants for HIV and AIDS prevention programs.

Appointments/organization

Appointments to the Board are made by the Governor, with consent of the Senate, for four-year terms, so that no business or professional group constitutes a majority and so that no more than five members are of the same political party. One member is appointed from each of the state's seven Congressional districts and two members from the state at large. It is also required by law that one Board member must be a county commissioner. Terms of service are staggered to assure both continuity and fresh perspective.

Meetings

Regular meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month, and special meetings as needed, to conduct public rulemaking hearings and take action on proposed rules and regulations; to take action on other matters as required by law or requested by the public, department staff or other agencies; and to hold informational hearings or receive briefings on public health issues in order to make policy recommendations.

Rules and Regulations established by the Board

The Board has authority for adopting regulations concerning a wide variety of important public health matters including: licensing standards for hospitals and health facilities; regulations pertaining to epidemic and communicable disease control; regulations pertaining to immunization of infants and children; regulations pertaining to the reporting, prevention and control of AIDS, HIV related illness and HIV infection; regulations pertaining to the detection, monitoring and investigation of environmental and chronic diseases; regulations pertaining to emergency medical services and the statewide trauma system; regulations to assure that

hospitals, local health departments, area trauma advisory councils and managed care organizations are prepared for a bioterrorist event or an emergency epidemic; sanitary standards for such facilities as retail food establishments, child care centers, schools, recreational sites and penal institutions; rules for the Tobacco Education, Prevention and Cessation Grant Program, the Cancer, Cardiovascular Disease and Chronic Pulmonary Disease Grant Program, the Health Disparities Grant Program, and the Nurse Home Visitor Program; rules for the Colorado Cancer Drug Repository Program; rules pertaining to the newborn screening program; rules pertaining to testing for alcohol and other drugs; rules pertaining to swimming pools and natural swimming areas; radiation control regulations; and rules governing the administration of Colorado's vital statistics system.

Brief History

The nine-member State Board of Health was established by act of Colorado's First General Assembly on March 22, 1877. The first State Board of Health was charged with the collection and study of vital statistics as a means of determining the causes of illness and death, the control of epidemics and contagious disease, and advice on proper sources of water supplies and places of sewage disposal.

Over the years, with growing concern about protecting the public health, public health laws evolved and the legislature gave additional authority to the State Board to enact and enforce public health rules and regulations.

In 1941, the Colorado legislature reorganized the state government through passage of the Administrative Code of 1941. Under this act, the Division of Public Health became a division of the executive branch of government under the direct supervision of the governor. The secretary of the State Board, Dr. Roy Cleere, became the executive officer of the Division of Public Health.

In 1947 the legislature created a Department of Public Health, taking it from the executive branch of state government and establishing two divisions -- the State Board of Health as the advisory, consultative and judiciary branch, and an executive division consisting of the state health officer and his staff. This was one of the seven "Sabin bills" that were passed in the 1947 legislative session as a result of Dr. Florence Sabin's campaign for public health in Colorado.

When state government was reorganized in 1968, the General Assembly recognized the vital importance of public health to the citizenry by establishing the Colorado Department of Health as one of the 17 departments of state government. The Board of Health was continued as the rule-making, advisory, policy-forming, appellate body, and the Division of Administration as the administrative and executive branch of the Department.