



State of Vermont
 Department of Health
 Commissioner's Office
 108 Cherry St.
 Burlington, VT 05401
 healthvermont.gov

[phone] 802-863-7281
 [fax] 802-951-1275

Agency of Human Services

RECEIVED
 2008 JUN 28 P 2:49
 BURLINGTON CLERK
 TREASURER'S OFFICE

COMMUNICATION
 DATE 7/16/07
 AGENDA ITEM # 10.10

June 20, 2007

Dear Town Health Officers:

We understand the vital role you play in our mission to protect the health of Vermonters. However, recent budget cuts have resulted in the cancellation of the Vermont Department of Health's Town Health Officer Program. This means, effective July 1, 2007, you will see the following changes:

1. Town health officer support by environmental health designees in Health Department district offices will no longer be available. However, district office staff will still provide you with referrals to local resources.
2. The Health Department will continue to answer calls about the following concerns: lead, asbestos, drinking water, radon, West Nile virus, infectious disease/epidemiology, animal bites and rabies. Call 1-800-464-4343 in Vermont for more information.
3. The enclosed table includes a list of agencies that can help with other common environmental health problems. This list is meant to be a resource, but it is not exhaustive. Therefore, you may need to contact agencies other than those listed here.
4. The Vermont Department of Health's Town Health Officer webpage is located at: <http://healthvermont.gov/local/tho/tho.aspx> This will provide a link to the Vermont statutes that grant the town health officer his or her authority. We have also provided forms to assist you in your duties:
 - Town Health Officer Recommendation Form
 - Town Health Officer Complaint & Inspection Form
 - Essential Maintenance Practices Checklist
 - Rental Housing Inspection Checklist
 - Animal Bite Report Form
5. Environmental health designees in Health Department district offices will no longer provide town health officer trainings. Trainings may be available through other agencies.
6. You no longer need to submit Animal Bite Report Forms to the Health Department. You should continue to provide a copy to your town clerk.

We appreciate your patience during this transitional period. If you have specific questions about this change, Kathleen Hall will be available to answer questions until July 1. Contact her at khall@vdh.state.vt.us. Again, thank you for your service.

Sincerely,

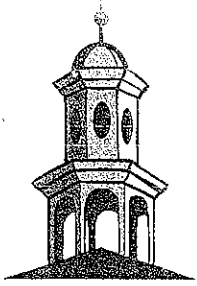
Christine Finley

Christine Finley, MSN, MPH
 Deputy Commissioner for Public Health

[Handwritten signature]

At their meeting of 7/16/07
 the Burlington City Council voted to
 waive the reading, accept this communication
 and place it on file. *refer it to Health officer Steve*
 Attest:

*Goodman, the Board of Health and the
 Mayor's Office via request for a report back
 from the Health Officer/ Mayor's Office regarding
 the impact of the 8/6/07 CC Meeting*



**VERMONT LEAGUE
OF CITIES & TOWNS**

89 Main Street, Suite 4
Montpelier, Vermont
05602-2948

Tel.: (802) 229-9111
Fax: (802) 229-2211

e-mail:
info@vlct.org

web:
www.vlct.org

July 16, 2007

Sharon Moffatt, RN, MSN
Commissioner, Department of Health
108 Cherry St.
Burlington VT 05401

Dear Commissioner Moffatt:

The Vermont League of Cities and Towns, representing all 246 cities and towns in the state, is exceedingly disappointed that the Department of Health is shedding its responsibility to municipal health officers. We understood during the legislative session that the Department would not have funding this year to actually conduct training for municipal health officers and are surprised that no discussion was initiated with municipalities about elimination of the entire Town Health Officer Program prior to the decision being made public. Municipalities around the state are stunned at the way in which the department has chosen to implement this.

Under current law, municipal health officers are recommended by local legislative bodies to the commissioner who then makes the appointment. Their scope of responsibility includes a range of issues that should be priorities for the state Department of Health, including sewage, garbage and other environmental health issues, infectious diseases and emergency planning for their management. One of the most time consuming and frustrating issues for municipal health officers is addressing complaints related to the rental housing health code.

Municipal health officers, most frequently lay people who volunteer their services, are the department's eyes in the field. Vermonters need the state Department of Health to reinstate its technical assistance program for municipal health officers, at the very least for the state rental housing code. If the department is indeed washing its hands of municipal health officers then the question of whether or not to appoint a municipal health officer should be made locally as should the actual appointment. Moreover, we will urge the legislature to enable municipalities to determine the scope of responsibility for the health officer in their municipality.

Sponsor of:

VLCT Health Trust, Inc.

VLCT Municipal Assistance
Center

VLCT Property and Casualty
Intermunicipal Fund, Inc.

VLCT Unemployment
Insurance Trust, Inc.

We appreciate the several conversations you initiated with us on this topic during the session. We are happy to discuss this issue with you again at any time.

Sincerely,

Karen Horn, Director
Public Policy & Advocacy