

The Public Health Law:
CHAPTER 70.05 REVISED CODE OF WASHINGTON (RCW)

The following is a brief synopsis of the most significant requirements of [RCW 70.05 – Local Health Departments, Boards, Officers – Regulations](#), and [70.46 – Health Districts](#). RCW 70.05 is the primary state law behind the formation, authority, power and duties of the local board of health, health officer, and administrative officer. RCW 70.46 distinguishes health districts from health departments but defers to RCW 70.05 for powers and duties. RCW 70.05:

- Requires the **board of county commissioners** to [establish a local board of health](#) for its jurisdiction.
- Requires the **local board of health** to [elect a chair](#) on an annual basis.
- Defines the [powers and duties](#) of the **local board of health**.
- Requires the **local board of health** to [appoint a health officer](#).
- Specifies the [qualifications](#) required for the **health officer**, and requires the local board of health to determine the salary and allowed expenses of the health officer.
- Defines the [powers and duties](#) of the **health officer**.
- Authorizes the **local board of health** to [appoint an administrative officer](#).
- Defines the [responsibilities of the administrative officer](#) as the executive secretary and administrative officer for the health board and its operations.
- Empowers the **administrative officer** to [employ technical and other personnel](#) as approved by the local board of health.
- Gives authority to the [state secretary of health to appoint a local health officer](#) if the local board of health refuses or neglects to do so.
- Requires **physicians** to [report dangerous or infectious diseases](#) to the health officer or state department of health, and gives authority to the health officer to [determine the nature of and response to disease](#) until the state department of health takes over.
- Specifies [violations, remedies, and penalties](#) for local health officers, administrative officers, and local board of health members who refuse or neglect to obey state public health regulations.

RCW 70.05 also contains requirements related to on-site sewage systems; moratorium on water, sewer hookups, or septic systems; free infectious disease testing for “good samaritans”; the allowance for public health service contracts; and encourages local health jurisdictions to perform child death reviews.