

**Section 1 Introduction**

**Welcome** to the self-directed online local health officer (LHO) training developed by the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Maine CDC). Every LHO must perform his or her duty as effectively as possible, using means that are most applicable to the circumstances and must be familiar with the law they are appointed to enforce, investigate or report, referring to the law itself as well as to guidance documents as needed.

Disclaimer: The information in this online training handbook is meant to serve as a guide; you and your community should apply these ideas and principles locally in the way that is most appropriate. The information contained in this handbook is not legal advice; if you have questions about a specific law or its application you should consult your town's legal counsel.

**Resource: Information on Health Alerts (HAN)**

CDC's Health Alert Network (HAN) is CDC's primary method of sharing cleared information about urgent public health incidents with public information officers; federal, state, territorial, and local public health practitioners; clinicians; and public health laboratories. To read more: <http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/newhan.shtml>

To receive Health Alerts from the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention Health Alert Network, sign-up at:

<http://www.maine.gov/tools/whatsnew/rss.php?tid=775>

## 1.1 Welcome!

Welcome to the local health officer online core training.

It is generally recognized that an effective Public Health System is best achieved at local levels. Accordingly the role of a town appointed and certified LHO is a critical part of local public health services. The LHOs have a variety of statutory duties and responsibilities and fulfill a critical role within their communities. This training is to provide you with a basic understanding of the laws, rules, and your authority in carrying out your duties. During this training, you will come across a number of resources that will help you perform your job with ease and success. Thank you for taking the time to complete this course.

***Maine CDC Organizational Chart - Appendix 1-A***

## 1.2 The Local Health Officer Training in Context



A “Local Health Officer” (LHO) is a term established by State Statute. An LHO can be a town employee, contractor, or volunteer and is always linked to a municipality. The LHO serves in legal terms as a municipal employee who has knowledge of his or her community and meets educational, training, and experience standards as set by the Department of Health and Human Services rule to comply with **Title 22 M.R.S.A. §451 et. seq. Appendix -1- B**

Maine LHOs are individuals from various backgrounds, professional experiences, qualifications and many other important occupations, who unite around the common goal of improving and caring for the health of their communities. At the town level, an LHO monitors the community through identifying and/or responding to immediate and trends in health risks to individuals or the community through town resident queries and/or the sharp eyes of the LHO.

Maine law requires all LHOs to obtain certification, within six months of appointment by the municipality, regardless of how long individuals have been in the role. The purpose of this training is to provide you with the knowledge, tools, and relevant resources to use while performing your duties.

The title “Local Health Officer” has come to mean a certified LHO; using this title assures the community that all LHOs share the same baseline level knowledge in the performance of their duties. Equally, it illustrates the current scope of specific LHO duties, responsibilities, and authority as defined in the LHO statute. We believe that a system of certified and connected LHOs is a system on which all towns and the state can rely.



The Division of Local Public Health (DLPH), along with your district public health liaison, stand ready to answer your questions and help you find the resources you need to succeed in your role as your town's LHO. DLPH will reinforce your learning experience by providing periodic training opportunities through webinars, other online training modules, and especially through your regular meetings with your district public health liaison.

Maine CDC would like to thank you for accepting the responsibilities of your appointment, your caring dedication, and your community service. We hope this online training manual will become a valued resource for you to begin or advance a rewarding experience. Your contribution as an LHO is vital to your community's well-being and safety.

### 1.3 Public Health Districts in Maine

To improve coordinated delivery of essential public health services, Department of



Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the Maine Legislature approved the establishment of eight public health districts. District boundaries were established using population size, geographic areas, hospital service areas, and county borders. A District Liaison coordinates a Public Health Unit with co-located Maine CDC staff in

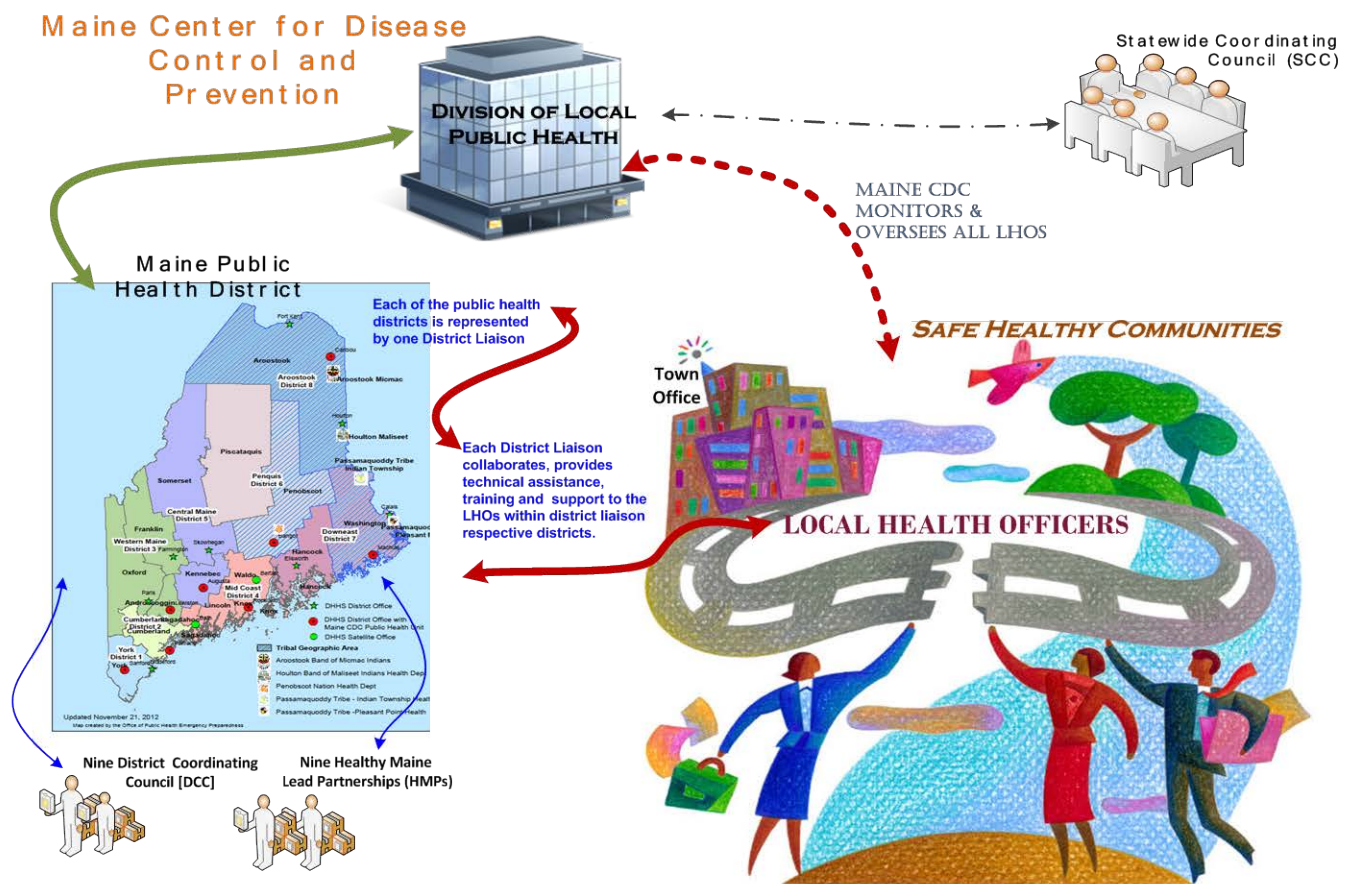
one DHHS regional office of each District. The Public Health Districts are: Aroostook District 8; Central District 5; Cumberland District 2; Downeast District 7; Mid-Coast District 4; Penquis District 6; Western District 3; and York District 1.

Similarly, in collaboration with Maine Tribes, a Tribal Health District was established with its boundaries determined by the Tribal Health Center service areas and staffed by a Tribal District Health Liaison. The Tribes have their own LHOs to serve Tribal members on reservation homelands; however, they are also available to serve Tribal members

who reside in municipalities covered in the geographic area served by Tribal Health Centers.

**Appendix-1- C- An Act to Amend the Laws Regarding Public Health Infrastructure.**

Municipal LHOs should seek to work with the Tribal District Liaison if there are issues of concern related to the health risks of town residents who are also enrolled members of a Tribe. Title 22 M.R.S.A. §411, subsection 4 & 5 was amended to legally recognize the Tribal District.



**LOCAL PUBLIC HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE**

Developed by J.H.Gopaul, February 2012/  
Updated 2/2013/.2v



