



VtPHA Guidelines for Policy Development

July 2022

Since it was established in 2002, the Vermont Public Health Association (VtPHA) has developed written policies on a variety of matters related to public health in Vermont. While the American Public Health Association (APHA) has an extensive library of well-researched, well-documented and well-referenced policies on a wide variety of public health matters, VtPHA thinks it is also beneficial to adopt policies consistent with APHA that relate specifically to the health and well-being of Vermont and its citizens.

Our goal is to publicly state and document VtPHA's positions on matters of current public health interest and importance in Vermont. The VtPHA Board, through the efforts of the Policy Committee, guides which policies should be developed and updated so that they underpin the advocacy priorities of VtPHA. Policies go through a committee review and editing process and when approved by the committee are forwarded to the Board for adoption and public dissemination.

The Policy Committee of the VtPHA will consider recommendations for the creation of new policy positions, or revisions to existing positions, from anyone with an interest in the health and well-being of Vermonters, after review and concurrence of the Board. The Policy Committee will engage in the review of new or current policies affecting Vermonters on an ongoing basis to identify the need for new positions. At a minimum, the committee will annually review from the date of adoption, and update if necessary, existing VtPHA policy positions.

After consideration of the current literature and science related to emerging public health issues, the Policy Committee will make recommendations for policy positions reflecting the unique cultural and demographic make-up of Vermont while considering equity for vulnerable populations in Vermont. Recommendations from the Policy Committee will be shared with the membership via targeted email and/or the VtPHA member newsletter for comment and feedback. After a two-week open response period for responses, the Policy Committee will consider this feedback and make revisions as appropriate.

VtPHA has two different categories of policies - Statements and Briefs:

- 1) Policy Statements are formal documents that are sufficiently comprehensive to represent the positions of VtPHA and to serve as the basis for testimony on bills and advocacy. These Statements are between 500-800 words on a thoroughly researched topic related to the health and well-being of Vermonters. The Policy Committee will draw from the most current scholarly literature and new developments related to



emerging public health issues and write formal Policy Statements. Each Policy Statement will be as consistent as possible in formatting; the subheadings of each Statement being: Description, Policy Statement, Supported Actions, Potential Barriers, Related Policies and References, along with the date of adoption.

- 2) Policy Briefs are less formal documents and are no more than 150 words in length and represent where VtPHA stands on a specific subject or issue without having the full weight of a Policy Statement. Policy Briefs typically include a short description/background on a public health matter of importance followed by several bulleted sentences indicating what actions VtPHA supports. No specific references need to be cited. These Policy Briefs represent the publicly stated view of VtPHA on a variety of subjects, but without the establishment of a formal public Policy Statement. Policy Briefs can guide the VtPHA leadership on when to sign on to letters of support and can be used to help write Letters to the Editor or develop testimony as needed.

Separating out the less formal Policy Briefs from the more formal Policy Statements allows VtPHA to keep an important record of its stance on a variety of matters, but also acknowledges that Policy Briefs and Policy Statements represent two different levels of detail, review, and content.

The VtPHA may be asked to support a specific request or policy action on behalf of an organization whose mission is related to public health. If the request is regarded as straightforward and is clearly in congruence with the VtPHA's policy position statements or briefs, the VtPHA President may respond on behalf of the Board. If the request requires further consideration, the President will bring the request to the Board for discussion. The Board may approve, decline, defer, or refer for further action and also may refer the request to the membership.