The agency **Policy on Policies** should be used to guide the development of all organizational Policies and Procedures. It will also guide and set the process for review, revision, and staff training on agency policies.

“The policy on policies should include:

- Guidelines on how the board of health approves agency policies (including which go to the board of health vs. health director)
- Detail on format for policies
- Protocol for establishing a new policy (including resource assessment)
- Detail on where policies are kept and how staff can access them
- Detail on how staff are informed of changes in policies
- Detail on how revisions are tracked.”

North Carolina Local Health Department Accreditation, (2020) page 84.

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**Definitions**

1. **Policy** - A settled course of action to be followed by a government or institution to obtain a desired end according to Stanhope & Lancaster (2015); Principles that guide actions and decisions (Kramer, 2019).
   a. “What” - the general course of action or direction
   b. “Why” – purpose of action being accomplished
   c. “Who” – will be performing this action

2. **Policy Statement** – A succinct statement that outlines the intent, purpose and objective of the policy and specific procedure that guides any decision making in the activity (Irving, 2014).

3. **Procedures** – A particular way of accomplishing a desired result according to *Taber's Online Dictionary* (2020). Detailed and explicit description, instructions and sequential actions of how and by whom (discipline/position) the work is to be performed (Kramer, 2019); the desired, intended process by specified persons to accomplish an objective in a designated event or proceeding on a course of action (Irving, 2014).

**Policies and procedures are important and needed for nurses in the workplace. Policies provide guidance with the procedure or protocol providing the action steps. In nursing research by Squires, Moralejo, & Lefort (2007), they researched three questions with the first question “Do nurses use policies and procedures to guide their nursing practice?” The study showed most nurses (81.9%) noted using information from policies and procedures in their practice daily. Policies and procedures can enlist nurses in evidence-based practice, but nurses need to use the policies in their practice. The purpose of policies, procedures and/or protocols include but are not restricted to the following (Kramer, 2019; Irving 2014):

1. Assist employees to attain agencies goals
2. Provides a framework for consistency in agency and procedural practice
3. Affects safe practice for employees and patients
4. Standardizes the care provided
5. Assists with instructing new staff how to work cohesively with the team
6. Provides employees elements of quality assurance and improvement programs
7. Promotes compliance with regulations and reaccreditation requirements

**Policies**

**Content of Policies**

(Items in boxed area on template below)

1. Title
2. Policy Category/Number (if applicable)
3. Approved By
   a. Section
   b. Program
4. Effective Date
5. Review Date
6. Current Revision Effective Date
7. Revision History Dates
8. Screen Print of Policy & Procedure Template for County Health Departments below.

*Please refer to the Policy and Procedure Template below and located in a usable word document under the “Toolkit” tab on this website: NC Public Health Nursing.

COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT
Policy and Procedure Template

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title:</th>
<th>Category/Number:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Approved By:</td>
<td>__________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>____________________</td>
<td>__________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section:</td>
<td>__________________________</td>
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<tr>
<td>Program:</td>
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<td>Review Date/s:</td>
<td>__________________________</td>
</tr>
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<td>Current Revision Effective Date:</td>
<td>__________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revision History Date/s:</td>
<td>__________________________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Purpose: (the “why”)

Policy Statement: (“what”)

Definitions:

Responsibilities:
**Body Content**

1. **Purpose** – states why; *The reason the policy exists*
2. **Policy Statement** – concise statement tells what will be accomplished or is expected to occur and the context for it
3. **Definition(s)** – provides the meaning of terms and words; clarifies/standardizes terms as indicated
4. **Responsibilities** – tells who is accountable and responsible for actions and steps
5. **Procedure** - outlines specific steps of what will be accomplished or performed; outlines specific steps of “what” will be done (see “Contents of Procedures” below on page 5)
6. **Legal or Licensing Authority** - references the legal basis for the policy, e.g. statute, rule, ordinance as indicated or licensure requirements
7. **Reference Policies/Procedures** - list other policies, plans, manuals or guidelines that may be relevant to this policy; note evidence-based resources
8. **Disclaimer Statement**: reminds staff member of the need to use their nursing judgment for each situation and scenario)
9. **Header &/or Footer**: consider standardized and consistent headers with the agency name and logo; footers may have a file name and date but should include page numbers on each page of policies (Irving, 2014; Kramer, 2019 & Robinson, 2016)
Note: Components of each policy may vary depending on the type and nature of the policy/procedure and per agencies Policy on Policies

When local health departments were required to become accredited in North Carolina (North Carolina Legislation 2005, p.143-144), agencies developed policies and procedures to guide and direct the organization work and actions. Below are examples of types of healthcare policies from Power DMS including a graphic display:

- Patient care policies
- Employee health and safety
- Data Privacy and/or Information Technology Security
- Security
- Medication/Pharmacy
- Administrative and Human Resources
- Social Media
- Clinical or Program policies
- Finance
Graphic example of policies and a procedure:

**Administrative Policies**
- May include Human Resource policies which help staff more efficiently run the operational side.
- Guides organizational activities and running an agency from a business & personnel perspective.
- Should be consistent with the agency mission statement to operate more effectively.

**Program Policies**
- Guidelines that direct the specific functions of each program.
- Include a description of the purpose and desired outcomes for each program.
- Should be consistent with agency Policy on Policies.

**Procedures**
- Detailed description of what, when, how, and by whom the work is to be done.
- Should be consistent with policy statements.

Example of Policies in Local Health Departments

1. **Clinical or Program Policies:**
   - Abbreviation Policy – Provides staff the abbreviations that are acceptable to use for documentation in the patient record and agency.
   - Pregnancy Testing & Nondirective Pregnancy Options Counseling Policy – Provides employees guidelines to follow along with the procedural steps for clients requiring this service.

2. **Administrative Policies:**
   - Vacation, other leave, or sick leave policies – Guidelines for staff requesting time off from work.
   - Recording Time Worked – Guidelines on recording time with rules and requirements for pay.
1. Purpose of procedure - why it is performed
2. Supplies and/or equipment needed – what will be used to accomplish the procedure
3. Staff member/s responsible – who will perform the procedure
4. Patient preparation and education – knowledge of what will be done
5. Detailed action steps including what will be performed and when to carry out the procedure
6. Documentation of what was performed
7. Follow-up if needed

**Note:** Components of procedures may vary depending on the type and multiple steps of the procedure. (Robinson, 2016)

Organization and management of policy and procedures is an important component of health care and can be the first step in development. Policy and procedure management is the process of developing, communicating, and organizing them so everyone has access and utilizes them in an agency. Having well managed and comprehensive policies and procedures supports the agencies programs, activities, a culture of compliance in the agency and continuity in patient care. Policies and procedures can be managed by placing them in a paper
Policy and procedures for programs can be in paper or “hard” copy and/or electronic form. The filing system for a hard copy and electronic form should be similar to each other if the agency maintains both. The agency should choose their format and use the same format on all policies for consistency. Policies must be accessible at all times:

- If electronic, everyone should have access at all times
- If a paper copy, it should be in a central location with access by all staff

Note: Consider keeping a paper copy or policy and procedure manual in the event of possible power outages, loss of connectivity, breach in computer security or damage from a disaster. (NCLHDA HDSAI, 2020 & Irving, 2014)
Example of Paper or “Hard Copy” Files

Occupational Health & Safety

Blood-borne Pathogens Policies

Laboratory

Collection of blood specimens by venipuncture
Example of An Electronic Folder/Filing System

- Occupational Health and Safety
  - Bloodborne Pathogens
    - Laboratory
    - Groupings
  - Sub-heading
    - Groupings
    - Groupings
  - Sub-heading
    - Groupings
    - Groupings
  - Collection of blood specimen by venipuncture
References


Squires, Janet, PhD, RN, Reay, Trish, Moralejo, Donna, PhD, RN, LeFort, Sandra, et al. (2012). Designing Strategies to Implement Research-Based Policies and Procedures: A Set of Recommendations for Nurse Leaders Based on the PARiHS Framework. *Journal of Nursing Administration*, 42, 293-297. [https://doi.org/10.1097/NNA.0b013e318253565f](https://doi.org/10.1097/NNA.0b013e318253565f)