

[By law](#), every town, city or municipality in Vermont (all 252) must have at least one town health officer (THO). The THO is recommended by town government officials and appointed by the Commissioner of Health for a three-year term. While these are town positions separate from the Vermont Department of Health, the Department administers the appointment process and provides technical support and training opportunities for THOs.

Appointment Process Overview

State law requires that the Commissioner of Health appoint a local health officer for each town, city, or municipality every three years. This is done at the recommendation of the selectboard, but if a town, city, or municipality fails to recommend a THO, the Commissioner will appoint the chair of the selectboard to this position.

Towns receive reminders to appoint a new health officer toward the end of the current officer's three-year term. Towns may appoint as many health officers as needed by recommending a health officer and additional deputy health officers to the Department.

KEY POINTS

- **By law, the Commissioner of Health must appoint a Town Health officer for each town.**
- **Towns are encouraged to recommend multiple health officers for appointment.**

Step-By-Step Guide to Town Health Officer Appointments

1. The town clerk is notified that the current THO's term is about to end through a letter from the Department of Health.
2. The town clerk advises the selectboard or city council to recommend a new THO for appointment by the Commissioner of Health.
3. The selectboard must complete the [Town Health Officer Recommendation Form](#) and the [Town Health Officer Oath/Affirmation Form](#).
4. Once completed, the town clerk should email both forms to: AHS.VDHTHO@vermont.gov.
5. After receiving the forms, the Health Commissioner appoints the THO and sends a certificate of appointment. Appointments are made the first business day of each month.
6. The THO is appointed for a term of three years.
7. If a THOs cannot complete their full term, they should submit a letter or email of resignation to their town's selectboard and the Department of Health. The selectboard can then recommend a new THO for appointment by the Health Commissioner.
8. The Commissioner may also remove a THO for cause and request that the selectboard make a new recommendation.

Requirements for Health Officers

There is no requirement for specific professional training or education to serve as a THO. The Health Department recommends that appointed health officers attend training courses offered by the Health Department to learn their duties and authorities under state law. The training courses also provide valuable information about technical issues that THOs may encounter. Many recorded trainings and resources are available on the Health Department's [THO webpage](#).

Some towns, cities or municipalities have built the THO position into an existing role within the town. When the THO is acting in their municipal role, such as enforcing municipal ordinances, they are not acting in their THO capacity.

Deputy Health Officers

Sometimes a THO may be unavailable or have a conflict of interest in an investigation. Towns should consider appointing at least one deputy town health officer to share responsibilities, provide back-up, and offer additional coverage of duties with the THO.

Deputy town health officers have the same authority as the primary town health officer under state law.

Consider appointing a Deputy Health Officer to share duties and step in if there is a conflict.

Contact:

Call or email the Environmental Health Division at 800-439-8550 or AHS.VDHTHO@vermont.gov with questions about the appointment process. Additional resources, including THO recommendation and oath forms, are available on the THO webpage: healthvermont.gov/tho