Policy: The North Carolina Local Health Department Accreditation (NCLHDA) Board will document and investigate complaints/allegations received against currently accredited local health departments that relate to accreditation standards, benchmarks and activities.

Purpose: The purpose of the investigation process is to determine whether the accredited local health department complained against is in violation of NCLHDA standards, or benchmarks or any defined Conditions of Participation in the program. If such is determined, the board may determine, through due process to revoke accreditation status.

Definitions:

Conditions of Participation – The Board-defined elements that a local health department must keep to participate in the accreditation process. Elements include:
- Sound financial practices
- Competent workforce and leadership
- Maintenance of minimum standards requirements

Violations could include:
- Extreme or on-going negligence
- Illegal actions by administration or employees
- Disregard for accreditation standards and benchmarks

Due Process – The adjudication process employed by the Board to investigate and declare that a granted status of accreditation has been revoked.
The basic outline of the process is:
1. Board Notification
2. Investigation of Claim
3. Hearing Scheduled and Conducted
4. Decision rendered in writing

Revocation of Accreditation Status – The removal of accredited status from a local health department by the NCLHDA Board.
Applicable Law, Rules and References:

**Responsible Person(s):** The NCLHDA Board is responsible for hearing complaints against an accredited local health department and determining whether accreditation is upheld or revoked.

**General Guidelines:**

1. Information required from the complainant must include, at a minimum:
   
   a) Name of complainant, including address and phone number (anonymous complaints will not be accepted)
   b) Brief narrative with details regarding the complaint
   c) Place of event(s)
   d) Names of witnesses, staff and others involved, if known

2. The complainant will be contacted by the Accreditation Administrator and may be requested to provide additional information.

3. Initially confirm that the complaint is related to adherence to the accreditation standards, benchmarks and/or activities.

4. The complaint, including the complainant information, will be forwarded to the local health department for a response. Information in the initial response must include, at a minimum:
   
   a) Corrective actions already initiated, if any
   b) Expected remedy or resolution

5. The local health department will be contacted by the Accreditation Administrator and may be requested to provide additional information.

6. If the complaint involves possible abuse, neglect or exploitation of a client/customer/patient; unprofessional conduct; or noncompliance with state or federal laws, the NCLHDA Board will notify the appropriate regulatory authority.

7. There are some complaints that the Board or Accreditation Administrator will not directly investigate because of lack of expertise in the area. They are:
   
   a. Program specific complaints
   b. Alleged misuse of state or federal funds
   c. Discontinuation of services

   These will be referred to the appropriate DPH program or official (Local Technical Assistance & Training Branch) with a report back to the Board – as appropriate – for determination if any findings relate to standards, benchmarks and activities.
Procedures:

1. A complainant may contact the NCLHDA Board through:
   a. the Accreditation Administrator at 919-843-3141
   b. facsimile at 919-966-5692
   c. e-mail (listed on the contacts page of our website:
      [http://nciph.sph.unc.edu/accred/contactus.htm](http://nciph.sph.unc.edu/accred/contactus.htm))
   d. mail to NCLHDA Board, NC Institute for Public Health, Campus Box 8165, Chapel Hill, NC 27599-8165
   e. in person at the NCLHDA Board offices at NCIPH, 400 Roberson St, Carrboro, NC.

2. A notice that a complaint has been received is forwarded to the Board Chair.

3. The investigation is completed by NCLHDA staff.

4. The findings of the investigation are presented to the Board.

5. The Board will deliberate the findings and render a decision through due process. This may take place at a regularly scheduled or called meeting specifically for the purpose of the hearing. A representative of the department may be asked to be present.

6. The decision is communicated to the local health department and to the complainant in writing.

7. The local health department may appeal to the Board via the process for an Appeal of Information in the Adjudication & Appeals Procedure.

8. The Board may uphold the local health department’s current accredited status. If accreditation is revoked, the accreditation status becomes conditional, the Board develops a corrective action plan and the department then follows requirements to become fully accredited.

Reference Plans and Policies:

Adjudication & Appeals Procedure