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Policy on Policies

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.

Policy and Procedure Development Overview

Please refer to the Policy and Procedure Template below on page 3 and located under the "Toolkit" tab on this website North Carolina Public Health Nursing.

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).

4. Protocols - A description of the steps to be taken in an experiment or procedure according to *Taber's Online Dictionary* (2020). Synonymous with a procedure (Irving, 2014).

Purpose of Policy & Procedures

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

Header Content   (Items in boxed area on template below)

1. Title
2. Policy Category/Number (if applicable)

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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.
   (Sheahan, 2019) https://bizfluent.com/how-8371703-write-medical-polices-procedures.html

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 <u>Template</u>

Title:	**Category/Number:**
Approved By: _____ _____	**Section:** _____ **Program:** _____
Effective Date: _____ **Current Revision Effective Date:** _____ **Revision History Date/s:** _____	**Review Date/s:** _____ _____ _____

Purpose: *(the "why")*

Policy Statement: *("what")*

Definitions:

Responsibilities:

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Procedure: ("what" actions)

Legal and/or Licensing Authority:

Disclaimer Statement:

References:

Header &/or Footer:

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)*

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Note: *Components of each policy may vary depending on the type and nature of the policy/procedure and per agencies Policy on Policies*
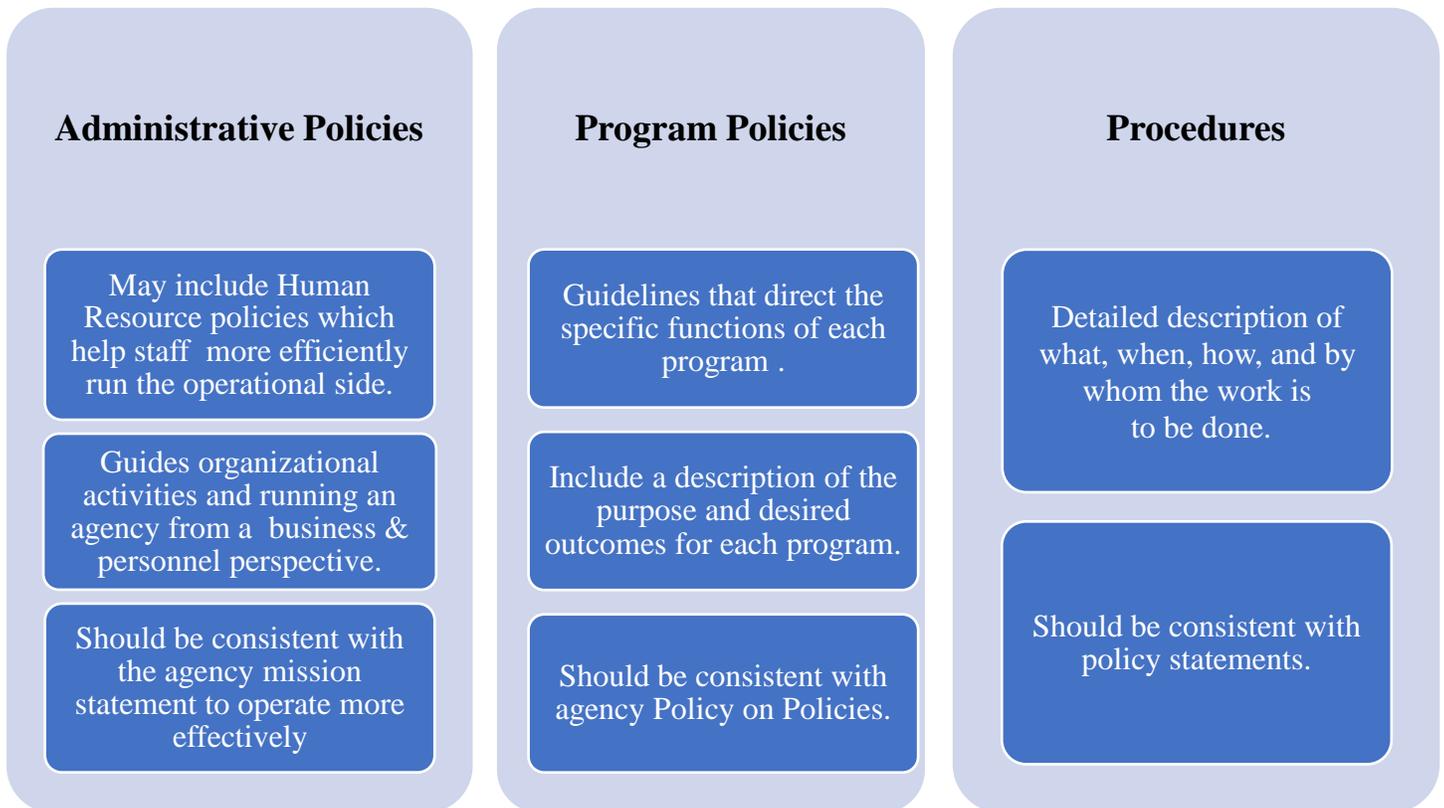
Types of Policies and Procedures

Information

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

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Graphic example of policies and a procedure:

Administrative Policies	**Program Policies**	**Procedures**
May include Human Resource policies which help staff more efficiently run the operational side.	Guidelines that direct the specific functions of each program .	Detailed description of what, when, how, and by whom the work is to be done.
Guides organizational activities and running an agency from a business & personnel perspective.	Include a description of the purpose and desired outcomes for each program.	Should be consistent with policy statements.
Should be consistent with the agency mission statement to operate more effectively	Should be consistent with agency Policy on Policies.	

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.

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Procedures

Content of the Procedure

Procedures are within the Policy Body Content (#5)

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)

Policy and Procedure Management

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

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manual, an electronic library or filing electronically or manually. Each agency should choose the best format and means of storage for their organization (Robinson, 2017 & NCALHDA HDSAI, 2020).

Tips for Developing a Filing System to Manage Policies

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)

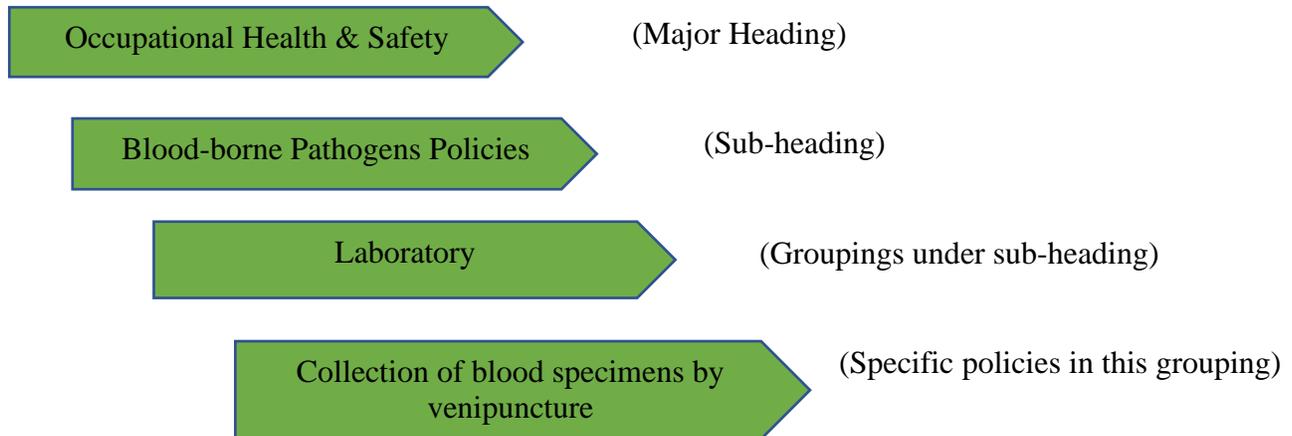**Tips for Developing Filing Systems**

Providing health services is a business and this usually means having many records and documents. Having a good, reliable, and organized filing system for both paper and digital records helps streamline access to these records and documents, provides consistency for ease of use by staff and ensures an efficient workflow. For electronic filing schemes each agency can use a reliable computer and choose how to organize their file folders. A scheduled, routine backup of the computer used to store the files is recommended and/or placement on a shared access system. Paper files require a filing storage system such as a cabinet or shelving to house the files. Clearly label the filing storage system chosen for ease of use by staff.   According to Fredman (2017), the overall goal in file organization is the fast and intuitive retrieval of any specific record.

https://smallbusiness.chron.com/maintain-electronic-hard-copy-filing-systems-43095.html
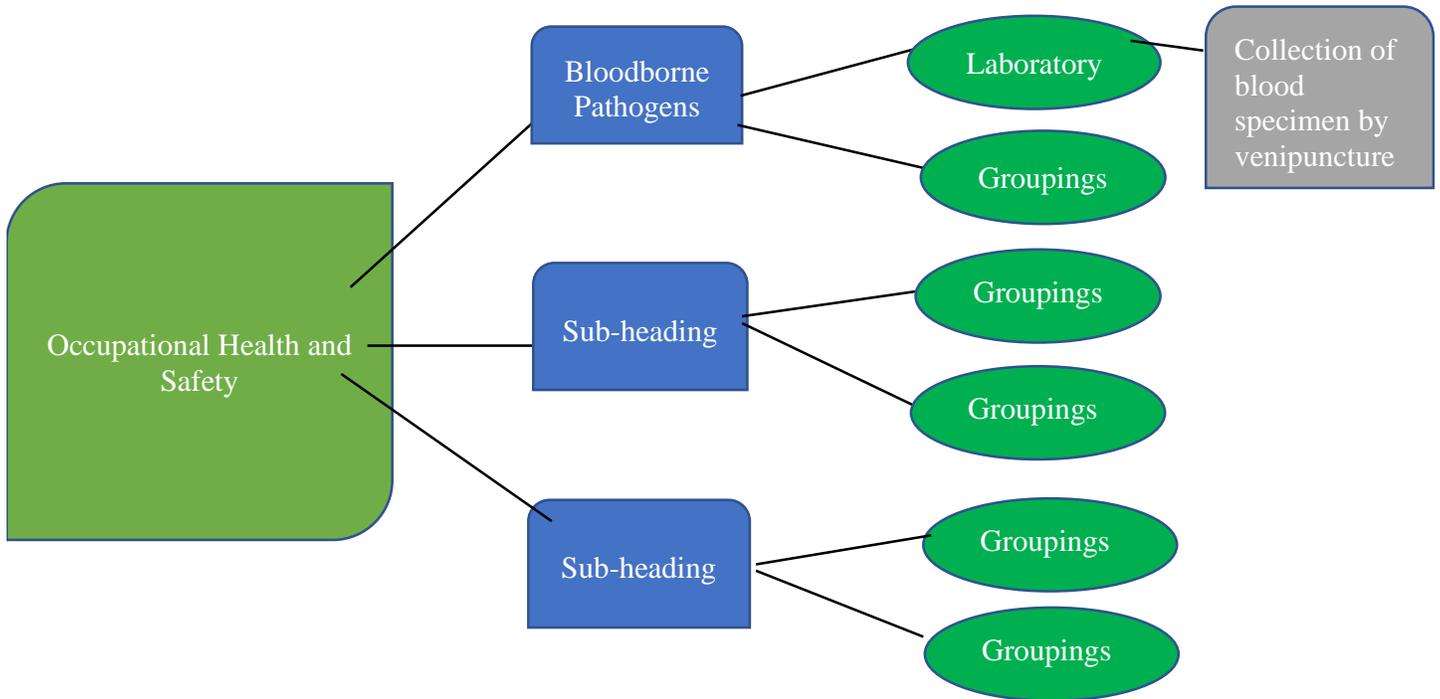
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Example of Paper or "Hard Copy" Files

Occupational Health & Safety	(Major Heading)
Blood-borne Pathogens Policies	(Sub-heading)
Laboratory	(Groupings under sub-heading)
Collection of blood specimens by venipuncture	(Specific policies in this grouping)

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Example of An Electronic Folder/Filing System

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