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Cross-reference: See definitions in s. 250.01.

252.01 Definitions. In this chapter:

- (1g) “Emergency medical responder” has the meaning given in s. 256.01 (4p).
- (1m) “HIV” means any strain of human immunodeficiency virus, which causes acquired immunodeficiency syndrome.
- (2) “HIV infection” means the pathological state produced by a human body in response to the presence of HIV.
- (2m) “HIV test” means a test for the presence of HIV or an antibody to HIV.
- (3) “Municipality” means any city, village or town.
- (4) “Peace officer” has the meaning given in s. 939.22 (22).
- (5) “Physician assistant” means a person licensed under s. 448.974.
- (6) “State epidemiologist” means the individual appointed by the state health officer under s. 250.02 (1) as the state epidemiologist for acute and communicable diseases.
- (7) “State patrol officer” means an officer of the state traffic patrol under s. 110.07 (1) (a).
- (8) “Validated HIV test result” means a result of an HIV test that meets the validation requirements determined to be necessary by the state epidemiologist.

History: 1993 a. 27 ss. 281, 283, 320, 338, 339, 341; 1993 a. 252; 2005 a. 187; 2009 a. 209; 2011 a. 161; 2017 a. 12; 2021 a. 23; 2025 a. 17, 18.

252.02 Powers and duties of department.

- (1) The department may establish systems of disease surveillance and inspection to ascertain the presence of any communicable disease. Any agent of the department may, with a special inspection warrant issued under s. 66.0119, enter any building, vessel or conveyance to inspect the same and remove therefrom any person affected by a communicable disease. For this purpose, the agent may require the person in charge of the vessel or conveyance, other than a railway car, to stop the same at any place and may require the conductor of any railway train to stop the train at any station or upon any sidetrack, for such time as may be necessary.
- (2) In an emergency, the department may provide those sick with a communicable disease with medical aid and temporary hospital accommodation.

- (3) The department may close schools and forbid public gatherings in schools, churches, and other places to control outbreaks and epidemics.
- (4) Except as provided in ss. 93.07 (24) (e) and 97.59, the department may promulgate and enforce rules or issue orders for guarding against the introduction of any communicable disease into the state, for the control and suppression of communicable diseases, for the quarantine and disinfection of persons, localities and things infected or suspected of being infected by a communicable disease and for the sanitary care of jails, state prisons, mental health institutions, schools, and public buildings and connected premises. Any rule or order may be made applicable to the whole or any specified part of the state, or to any vessel or other conveyance. The department may issue orders for any city, village or county by service upon the local health officer. Rules that are promulgated and orders that are issued under this subsection supersede conflicting or less stringent local regulations, orders or ordinances.
- (5) If any public officer or employee or any person in charge of any building, vessel, conveyance, jail, state prison, mental health institution or school fails to comply with a rule promulgated or order issued under sub. (4), the department may appoint an agent to execute its rules or orders. Expenses that an agent incurs shall be paid by the unit of government that employs the person or of which the public officer is a member. If the building, vessel, conveyance, mental health institution or school is privately owned the state shall pay the expenses that the agent incurs.
- (6) The department may authorize and implement all emergency measures necessary to control communicable diseases.
- (7) The department shall promulgate rules that specify medical conditions treatable by prescriptions or nonprescription drug products for which pharmacists and pharmacies must report under s. 450.145 (1).

History: 1981 c. 291; 1993 a. 27 s. 284; Stats. 1993 s. 252.02; 1999 a. 150 s. 672; 2001 a. 109; 2005 a. 198; 2015 a. 55.

Cross-reference: See also ch. DHS 145, Wis. adm. code.

An order issued by the Department of Health Services confining all people to their homes, forbidding travel, and closing businesses exceeded the statutory authority of this section. *Wisconsin Legislature v. Palm*, 2020 WI 42, 391 Wis. 2d 497, 942 N.W.2d 900, 20-0765.

Discussing whether an emergency order issued by the Department of Health Services under sub. (3) is a rule that must comply with rule-making procedures in ch. 227. *Tavern League of Wisconsin, Inc. v. Palm*, 2021 WI 33, 396 Wis. 2d 434, 957 N.W.2d 261, 20-1742.

252.03 Duties of local health officers.

- (1) Every local health officer, upon the appearance of any communicable disease in his or her territory, shall immediately investigate all the circumstances and make a full report to the appropriate governing body and also to the department. The local health officer shall promptly take all measures necessary to prevent, suppress and control communicable diseases, and shall report to the appropriate governing body the progress of the communicable diseases and the measures used against them, as needed to keep the appropriate governing body fully informed, or at such intervals as the secretary may direct. The local health officer may inspect schools and other public buildings within his or her jurisdiction as needed to determine whether the buildings are kept in a sanitary condition.
- (2) Local health officers may do what is reasonable and necessary for the prevention and suppression of disease; may forbid public gatherings when deemed necessary to control outbreaks or epidemics and shall advise the department of measures taken.
- (2j) A local health officer may not issue a mandate to close any business in order to control an outbreak or epidemic of communicable disease for longer than 30 days unless the governing body of the political subdivision in which the order is intended to apply approves one extension of the order, not to exceed 30 days. A mandate to close more than one business as provided under this subsection may not distinguish between essential and nonessential businesses. In this subsection, “political subdivision” means a city, village, town, or county.
- (3) If the local authorities fail to enforce the communicable disease statutes and rules, the department shall take charge, and expenses thus incurred shall be paid by the county or municipality.
- (4) No person may interfere with the investigation under this chapter of any place or its occupants by local health officers or their assistants.

History: 1981 c. 291; 1993 a. 27 s. 285; Stats. 1993 s. 252.03; 2023 a. 12.

Local health officers do not have the statutory power to close schools under this section. This section lists a series of discrete powers afforded local health officers in order to address communicable diseases. Because the legislature expressly granted local health officers discrete powers under this section but omitted the power to close schools,

local health officers do not possess that power. *James v. Heinrich*, 2021 WI 58, 397 Wis. 2d 516, 960 N.W.2d 350, 20-1419.

This section grants local health officers the authority to issue public health orders. *Becker v. Dane County*, 2022 WI 63, 403 Wis. 2d 424, 977 N.W.2d 390, 21-1343.

Although the Wisconsin Supreme Court's decision in *Palm*, 2020 WI 42, is not directly controlling on powers of local health officers under this section, it is advisable to limit enforcement under this section to ordinances or administrative enforcement. Also, local authorities should ensure that any measures that direct people to stay at home, forbid certain travel, or close certain businesses speak specifically to the local authority's statutory power under subs. (1) and (2) to "prevent, suppress and control communicable diseases" and "forbid public gatherings when deemed necessary to control outbreaks or epidemics." OAG 3-20.

252.04 Immunization program.

- (1)** The department shall carry out a statewide immunization program to eliminate mumps, measles, rubella (German measles), diphtheria, pertussis (whooping cough), poliomyelitis and other diseases that the department specifies by rule, and to protect against tetanus. Any person who immunizes an individual under this section shall maintain records identifying the manufacturer and lot number of the vaccine used, the date of immunization and the name and title of the person who immunized the individual. These records shall be available to the individual or, if the individual is a minor, to his or her parent, guardian or legal custodian upon request.
- (2)** Any student admitted to any elementary, middle, junior, or senior high school or into any child care center or nursery school shall, within 30 school days after the date on which the student is admitted, present written evidence to the school, child care center, or nursery school of having completed the first immunization for each vaccine required for the student's grade and being on schedule for the remainder of the basic and recall (booster) immunization series for mumps, measles, rubella (German measles), diphtheria, pertussis (whooping cough), poliomyelitis, tetanus, and other diseases that the department specifies by rule or shall present a written waiver under sub. (3).
- (3)** The immunization requirement is waived if the student, if an adult, or the student's parent, guardian, or legal custodian submits a written statement to the school, child care center, or nursery school objecting to the immunization for reasons of health, religion, or personal conviction. At the time any school, child care center, or nursery school notifies a student, parent, guardian, or legal custodian of the immunization requirements, it shall inform the person in writing of the person's right to a waiver under this subsection.
- (3m)** Any government entity; public or private elementary, middle, junior high, or senior high school; childcare center or nursery school; or health care provider, as defined in s. 146.81 (1), that sends a piece of mail containing information that could disclose another person's immunization status, including immunization reminders sent by U.S. mail, shall ensure that any information that could disclose a person's immunization status or otherwise allow someone to infer a person's immunization status is enclosed and sealed within the piece of mail and that no such information is visible on the outside of the piece of mail.
- (4)** The student, if an adult, or the student's parent, guardian, or legal custodian shall keep the school, child care center, or nursery school informed of the student's compliance with the immunization schedule.
- (5)**
 - (a)** By the 15th and the 25th school day after the date on which the student is admitted to a school, child care center, or nursery school, the school, child care center, or nursery school shall notify in writing any adult student or the parent, guardian, or legal custodian of any minor student who has not met the immunization or waiver requirements of this section. The notices shall cite the terms of those requirements and shall state that court action and forfeiture penalty could result due to noncompliance. The notices shall also explain the reasons for the immunization requirements and include information on how and where to obtain the required immunizations.
 - (b)**
 1. A school, child care center, or nursery school may exclude from the school, child care center, or nursery school any student who fails to satisfy the requirements of sub. (2).
 2. Beginning on July 1, 1993, if the department determines that fewer than 98 percent of the students in a child care center, nursery school, or school district who are subject to the requirements of sub. (2) have complied with sub. (2), the child care center or nursery school shall exclude any child who fails to satisfy the requirements of sub. (2) and the school district shall exclude any student enrolled in grades kindergarten to 6 who fails to satisfy the requirements of sub. (2).
 3. Beginning on July 1, 1995, if the department determines that fewer than 99 percent of the students in a child care center, nursery school, or school district who are subject to the requirements of

sub. (2) have complied with sub. (2), the child care center or nursery school shall exclude any child who fails to satisfy the requirements of sub. (2) and the school district shall exclude any student enrolled in grades kindergarten to 6 who fails to satisfy the requirements of sub. (2).

4. No student may be excluded from public school under this paragraph for more than 10 consecutive school days unless, prior to the 11th consecutive school day of exclusion, the school board provides the student and the student's parent, guardian or legal custodian with an additional notice, a hearing and the opportunity to appeal the exclusion, as provided under s. 120.13 (1) (c) 3.
- (6) The school, child care center, or nursery school shall notify the district attorney of the county in which the student resides of any minor student who fails to present written evidence of completed immunizations or a written waiver under sub. (3) within 60 school days after being admitted to the school, child care center, or nursery school. The district attorney shall petition the court exercising jurisdiction under chs. 48 and 938 for an order directing that the student be in compliance with the requirements of this section. If the court grants the petition, the court may specify the date by which a written waiver shall be submitted under sub. (3) or may specify the terms of the immunization schedule. The court may require an adult student or the parent, guardian, or legal custodian of a minor student who refuses to submit a written waiver by the specified date or meet the terms of the immunization schedule to forfeit not more than \$25 per day of violation.
- (7) If an emergency arises, consisting of a substantial outbreak as determined by the department by rule of one of the diseases specified in sub. (2) at a school or in the municipality in which the school is located, the department may order the school to exclude students who are not immunized until the outbreak subsides.
- (8) The department shall provide the vaccines without charge, if federal or state funds are available for the vaccines, upon request of a school district or a local health department. The department shall provide the necessary professional consultant services to carry out an immunization program, under the requirements of sub. (9), in the jurisdiction of the requesting local health department. Persons immunized may not be charged for vaccines furnished by the department.
- (9)
 - (a) An immunization program under sub. (8) shall be supervised by a physician, physician assistant, or advanced practice registered nurse selected by the school district or local health department who shall issue written orders for the administration of immunizations that are in accordance with written protocols issued by the department.
 - (b) If the physician, physician assistant, or advanced practice registered nurse under par. (a) is not an employee of the county, city, village or school district, receives no compensation for his or her services under par. (a) and acts under par. (a) in accordance with written protocols issued by the department, he or she is a state agent of the department for the purposes of ss. 165.25 (6), 893.82 (3) and 895.46.
 - (c) The department may disapprove the selection made under par. (a) or may require the removal of a physician, physician assistant, or advanced practice registered nurse selected.
- (9m) A pharmacist or pharmacy that administers a vaccine under this section to a person 6 to 18 years of age shall update the Wisconsin Immunization Registry established by the department within 7 days of administering the vaccine.
- (10) The department shall, by rule, prescribe the mechanisms for implementing and monitoring compliance with this section. The department shall prescribe, by rule, the form that any person immunizing a student shall provide to the student under sub. (1).
- (11) Annually, by July 1, the department shall submit a report to the legislature under s. 13.172 (3) on the success of the statewide immunization program under this section.

History: 1993 a. 27 ss. 181, 470; 1995 a. 32, 77, 222; 2009 a. 185; 2015 a. 55; 2021 a. 81; 2025 a. 18, 134.

Cross-reference: See also chs. DHS 144 and 146, Wis. adm. code.

252.041 Compulsory vaccination during a state of emergency.

- (1) Except as provided in sub. (2), during the period under which the department is designated as the lead state agency, as specified in s. 250.042 (2), the department, as the public health authority, may do all of the following as necessary to address a public health emergency:
 - (a) Order any individual to receive a vaccination unless the vaccination is reasonably likely to lead to serious harm to the individual or unless the individual, for reasons of religion or conscience, refuses to obtain the vaccination.

- (b) Isolate or quarantine, under s. 252.06, any individual who is unable or unwilling for reasons specified under par. (a) to receive vaccination under par. (a).
- (2) The department shall promulgate rules that specify circumstances, if any, under which vaccination may not be performed on an individual.

History: 2001 a. 109; 2025 a. 129.

252.05 Reports of cases.

- (1) Any health care provider, as defined in s. 146.81 (1) (a) to (p), who knows or has reason to believe that a person treated or visited by him or her has a communicable disease, or having a communicable disease, has died, shall report the appearance of the communicable disease or the death to the local health officer. The health agency of a federally recognized American Indian tribe or band may report this information to the local health officer. The local health officer shall report this information to the department or shall direct the person reporting to report to the department. Any person directed to report shall submit this information to the department.
- (2) Each laboratory shall report as prescribed by the department those specimen results that indicate that an individual providing the specimen has a communicable disease, or having a communicable disease, has died, or that the department finds necessary for the surveillance, control, diagnosis, and prevention of communicable diseases.
- (3) Anyone having knowledge or reason to believe that any person has a communicable disease shall report the facts to the local health officer or to the department.
- (4) Reports under subs. (1) and (2) shall state so far as known the name, sex, age, and residence of the person, the communicable disease and other facts the department or local health officer requires. Report forms, including forms appropriate for reporting under s. 95.22, may be furnished by the department and distributed by the local health officer.
- (5) All reports shall be made within 24 hours, unless otherwise specified by the department, by telephone, telegraph, mail or electronic means or by deposit at the office of the local health officer.
- (6) Any local health officer, upon receiving a report, shall cause a permanent record of the report to be made and upon demand of the department transmit the original or a copy to the department, together with other information the department requires. The department may store these records as paper or electronic records and shall treat them as patient health care records under ss. 146.81 to 146.835.