



Overview

Public Health Laws are regulations created by the executive branch agencies. Executive branch agencies have the authority to make laws based on statutes passed by the legislature. Agencies can only issue regulations on subjects mandated by statutes. Regulations explain the details necessary to implement public health laws. Generally, you may read regulations together with the statutes under which they were made.

Regulations are published in subject arrangements called codes. You can find regulations in print and online. The **Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR)** is the official compilation of all administrative regulations issued by the State of Maryland's agencies. COMAR is arranged in volumes with the title number marked on each volume. Each title number represents a State department (e.g., Title 10 is the Maryland Department of Health). COMAR regulations are arranged in one numeric sequence by codification number throughout the entire set. Each number includes elements representing the department and its agencies and subdivisions responsible for each regulation.

An example of a COMAR regulation number is COMAR 10.06.01.01:

- ★ 10 Title – Maryland Department of Health
- ★ 06 Subtitle – Diseases
- ★ 01 Chapter – Communicable Diseases and Related Conditions of Public Health Importance
- ★ 01 Regulation – These numbers are expanded when greater detail is required

This reference document outlines public health laws and regulations in the State of Maryland.

Acronym Glossary

- AIDS: Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
- COMAR: Code of Maryland Regulations
- HIV: Human Immunodeficiency Virus
- LHO: Local Health Officer
- LHD: Local Health Department
- MDE: Maryland Department of the Environment
- MDH: Maryland Department of Health
- SMCHD: St. Mary's County Health Department

Topic	Public Health Arena	Regulation or Law Citation	Public Health Agency's Role
County Board of Health Authority	Public Health Authority	MD Health - General Code § 3-201 (2025)	Outlines the legal structure for county boards of health in Maryland and establishes that the governing body of a county serves as the County Board of Health. In St. Mary's County, the Board of Health consists of the County Commissioners and LHO.
Local Health Officer Authority	Public Health Authority	MD Health - General Code § 3-306 (2025)	Outlines the powers and duties of LHOs. Grants them the authority to enforce and execute state and local health laws and appoint and manage LHD staff.
Investigation Authority	Public Health Authority	MD Environment Code § 10-201 (2025)	Grants LHO the authority to investigate any condition that is dangerous to human health; to investigate sanitary conditions of schools, places of business, and places of employment; and order the abatement of a nuisance based on findings from the investigation(s).
Local Health Services Funding	Fiscal	COMAR 10.04.01 MD Health - General Code § 2-304 (2025)	Governs the funding, financial conditions, and distribution of State funds for core local health services across Maryland. Dictates the public health services that must receive funding from MDH.

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Child Abuse and Neglect	Social Services	COMAR 07.02.07.01 COMAR 07.02.07.05 COMAR 07.02.07.06 COMAR 07.02.07.07 COMAR 07.02.07.08 COMAR 07.02.07.09	The local Department of Social Services (DSS) and local law enforcement agency retain the sole authority to accept, screen, investigate, and close cases of child abuse and neglect. The LHD operates as a mandatory reporter of suspected child abuse or neglect, an information provider, diagnostic partner, and multi-disciplinary collaborator in DSS/law enforcement investigations. LHDs are mandated to disclose health records regarding a child being assessed for maltreatment to DSS/law enforcement, pertaining to an investigation. Any LHD employee, including clinical providers, who suspect abuse or neglect during a clinic or home health visit is mandated to file a report with DSS and/or law enforcement.
Community-Based Behavioral Health Programs	Behavioral Health	COMAR 10.63.01.01 COMAR 10.63.01.02 COMAR 10.63.01.03 COMAR 10.63.01.04 COMAR 10.63.01.05	MDH has exclusive authority to grant, transfer, deny, or revoke community-based behavioral health program licenses. MDH determines which providers are exempt from licensure requirements and has the authority to impose penalties against organizations that fail to comply with safety standards or violate participant rights. The LHD reviews critical incidents reported by programs and provides oversight.
General Control Measures for Communicable Diseases	Communicable Diseases	COMAR 10.06.01.06	Grants MDH and LHD broad, flexible authority to handle any known, novel, or emerging biological threats. The LHO can issue immediate orders (e.g., mask mandates, temporary isolation orders) that carry the force of law. The LHO must respond to all reported or suspected disease outbreaks within their jurisdiction and is required to investigate cases when requested by MDH. Grants MDH and LHDs access to medical records and other information necessary to complete the investigation.

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Reportable Communicable Diseases	Communicable Diseases	COMAR 10.06.01.04 COMAR 10.06.01.03	LHDs are required to report certain infectious diseases and submit clinical materials to MDH. External community entities (e.g., physicians, hospitals, medical laboratories, school principals, child care providers, and food establishment operators) are required to report certain infectious diseases to the LHO.
Tuberculosis	Communicable Diseases - Tuberculosis	COMAR 10.06.01.20	Authorizes LHDs to conduct contact investigations and surveillance, provide treatment protocols, and administer treatment following a positive clinical identification of tuberculosis (TB). Authorizes the LHO to mandate isolation, issue public health orders, and/or pursue civil confinement for infectious individuals. MDH maintains a centralized registry of all active and latent TB infections and administers a state-wide TB control program.
Sexually Transmitted Infections	Communicable Diseases - Sexually Transmitted Infections	COMAR 10.06.07 CDC 2021 STI Treatment Guidelines	Grants LHDs authority to provide expedited partner therapy (EPT) to sexual partners of diagnosed patients without a physical assessment for certain sexually transmitted infections. LHDs are required to provide patients and partners with counseling and educational materials created and distributed by MDH.
HIV and CD4+ Investigations and Case Reporting	Communicable Diseases - HIV/AIDS	COMAR 10.18.02.08 MD Health - General Code § 18-207 (2025)	LHD is required to check for duplication of HIV case reporting, conduct active case investigations for new cases, and retain certain case files with positive HIV, viral load, or CD4+ count. The LHD must submit case reports to MDH using approved, secure electronic methods.
HIV Testing Procedures	Communicable Diseases - HIV/AIDS	COMAR 10.18.08.01 COMAR 10.18.08.06 COMAR 10.18.08.08	MDH establishes standards governing HIV testing in clinical and non-clinical settings. LHDs may serve as the primary clinical deliverer, outreach coordinator, and mandatory partner notification source. LHDs must provide specific pre-test information to patients, provide positive test results to patients in person, ensure that patients are directly linked to

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		COMAR 10.18.08.09 COMAR 10.18.08.10 COMAR 10.18.08.12	appropriate medical care, and document test declinations in the patient's medical record.
HIV and Hepatitis Testing for Convicted or Accused Persons	Communicable Diseases - HIV/AIDS	COMAR 10.52.10	Establishes procedures for HIV and Hepatitis C testing of persons accused and/or convicted of certain crimes. The LHD is the administrative and clinical agent of the court for enforcing and coordinating testing.
Meningococcal Vaccination Requirements for Students in Institutions of Higher Education	Communicable Diseases - Immunizations	COMAR 10.06.05	MDH mandates that individuals enrolled in institutions of higher education who are living in on-campus student housing must receive the meningococcal vaccination and provide documentation.
Required Immunizations for K-12 Students	Communicable Diseases - Immunizations	COMAR 10.06.04.03 The Vax Act (2026)	MDH mandates that students enrolled in public or private pre-school and K-12 programs must receive certain vaccinations. The Secretary of Health establishes the schedule of required vaccine doses.
Rabies Control	Communicable Diseases - Animal-Borne Diseases	COMAR 10.06.02	MDH establishes statewide clinical protocols for rabies treatment and holds geographic quarantine powers. LHDs report bite incidents to MDH, enforce animal isolation and monitoring, ensure community-wide access to rabies post-exposure prophylaxis, and conduct field investigations.

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Mosquito and Tick Control	Communicable Diseases - Vector-Borne Diseases	St. Mary's County Mosquito Control Program SMCHD Tick-Borne Illness Guidance	MDH conducts human case tracking, laboratory testing of vectors, and declares vector-borne disease outbreaks. LHDs may respond to rodent complaints, implement the State's Mosquito Control Program, investigate animal hoarding and vermin/insect infestations, and promote vector-borne disease awareness (e.g., Lyme disease).
Handling, Treatment, and Disposal of Special Medical Waste	Communicable Diseases - Waste Disposal	COMAR 10.06.06	MDH defines what substances constitute a biohazardous threat, evaluates waste treatment technology, and establishes waste disposal requirements. LHDs must ensure their clinics comply with MDH rules and report any illegal waste disposal to MDH.
Isolation and Quarantine	Communicable Diseases - Quarantine	COMAR 10.59.01	Grants the Secretary of Health emergency authority to issue isolation or quarantine directives to individuals or entire populations. The LHO shall coordinate with MDH to identify a suitable quarantine location if the individual's home is unsuitable and ensure the quarantine site is equipped with food, water, and other necessities.
Assisted Living Program Standards	Facilities - Assisted Living Programs	COMAR 10.07.14.04 COMAR 10.07.14.05 COMAR 10.07.14.07 COMAR 10.07.14.08 COMAR 10.07.14.09 COMAR 10.07.14.11 COMAR 10.07.14.12 COMAR 10.07.14.33	MDH establishes licensing, level-of-care classification, and quality-compliance monitoring requirements for Assisted Living Programs, including inspections and monitoring by MDH and/or LHDs.

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		COMAR 10.07.14.57 COMAR 10.07.14.62	
Adult Day Care Program Standards	Facilities - Adult Day Care Programs	COMAR 10.12.04.03 COMAR 10.12.04.04 COMAR 10.12.04.07 COMAR 10.12.04.08	MDH establishes licensing and inspection requirements for Adult Day Care for the Elderly and Adults with Medical Disability programs, including monitoring by MDH and/or LHDs.
Food Canning	Food Safety	COMAR 10.15.01	MDH establishes requirements for licensing operation, manufacturing, equipment, and canning and acidified food plants and products. LHDs ensure facilities operating within their jurisdiction possess valid licenses and comply with quality and safety standards.
Food Service Facilities	Food Safety	COMAR 10.15.03	MDH establishes requirements to ensure that food service facilities serve food that is safe for human consumption and that buildings meet proper standards for food preparation, labeling, and disposal. LHDs issue licenses and permits, conduct inspections, provide training, and enforce penalties to ensure compliance with quality and safety standards.
Food and Drink Processing & Transportation	Food Safety	COMAR 10.15.04	MDH establishes processing, food labeling, plan review, transportation, and storage requirements to ensure that food and drink items for human consumption are processed and transported in accordance with sanitary practices. Grants LHDs authority over agricultural producers who process small-batch food on-farm, including licensing.

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Foodborne Illness Investigation	Food Safety	COMAR 10.15.04.20 COMAR 10.15.04.21 COMAR 10.15.04.22 COMAR 10.15.04.23	LHDs may investigate foodborne and waterborne illnesses related to food service facilities and within institutional facilities.
Frozen Dairy Foods and Ices	Food Safety	COMAR 10.15.05	MDH establishes quality, safety, and labeling standards, conducts audits of commercial wholesale factories, and issues operating permits. LHDs may inspect local retail food spaces to ensure compliance with quality and safety standards.
Pasteurized Grade A Milk	Food Safety	COMAR 10.15.06	MDH establishes standards and limits for raw and pasteurized milk production and storage, controls licensing, dictates recurring inspections and tracking of farms and processing plants, and enforces regulations. LHDs may regulate milk handling in local schools, hospitals, and retailers.
Manufactured Grade Milk	Food Safety	COMAR 10.15.09	MDH issues manufacturing permits, establishes inspection schedules and conducts inspections, and enforces penalties for violations. LHDs may conduct investigations and enforce impoundment of improperly handled milk products.
Farmstead Cheese	Food Safety	COMAR 10.15.08	MDH grants and monitors permits, conducts inspections and audits, mandates monthly raw milk lab testing, and enforces penalties.

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Crab Meat	Food Safety	COMAR 10.15.02	MDH establishes regulations for licensing, processing operations, sanitation, storage, and labeling to ensure safe and sanitary crab meat and safe working conditions for employees.
Shellfish	Food Safety	COMAR 10.15.07	MDH licenses and certifies shellfish operations, establishes and enforces sanitation standards, oversees food safety standards to prevent foodborne illness, and monitors operations for compliance.
Seafood	Food Safety	COMAR 10.15.10	MDH establishes and enforces requirements governing the safe handling, processing, storage, and distribution of seafood products; conducts hazard analyses and inspections; monitors compliance; and imposes penalties for violations.
Bottled Water	Food Safety	COMAR 10.15.11	MDH establishes licensing and regulatory requirements for bottled water plants; provides oversight of water sources; monitors water quality and enforces quality standards; provides approval and oversight of water treatment processes; and inspects and monitors plants for compliance.
Controlled Dangerous Substances	Dangerous Devices and Substances	COMAR 10.19.03	MDH administers and enforces the State's controlled dangerous substances program through registration, inspection, investigation, compliance monitoring, enforcement, and oversight of the disposal of entities authorized to handle controlled substances.

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Poison Prevention	Dangerous Devices and Substances	COMAR 10.19.06	MDH administers and enforces poison prevention packaging requirements by adopting child-resistant packaging standards, overseeing compliance with poison prevention regulations, and supporting the prevention of accidental poisoning through packaging safeguards.
Mobile Home Parks	Housing	COMAR 10.16.02	MDH establishes and enforces standards governing the construction, maintenance, sanitation, and safety of mobile home parks. LHDs issue permits; conduct inspections; investigate complaints; monitor compliance with water, sewage, refuse, and vector control requirements; and enforce health and sanitation standards.
Campgrounds	Housing	COMAR 10.16.03	MDH establishes and enforces standards for the construction, operation, maintenance, sanitation, and safety of campgrounds. LHDs issue permits; conduct inspections; investigate complaints; monitor water supply, sewage disposal, refuse management, food safety, vector control, and recreational water facilities; and enforce compliance with health and safety standards.
Youth Camps	Housing	COMAR 10.16.06	MDH certifies, inspects, monitors, and enforces health and safety requirements for youth camps. LHDs review applications, issue certificates of compliance, conduct inspections, investigate complaints, collect illness and injury data, oversee environmental health conditions, and enforce compliance with health and safety standards.
Outdoor Music Festivals	Housing	COMAR 10.16.05	MDH establishes regulations governing health permits for outdoor music festivals. LHDs evaluate event plans; issue or deny health permits; oversee water supply, sewage disposal, sanitation, food safety, refuse management, and emergency medical services; conduct inspections, and may suspend or revoke permits when health and safety standards are not met.

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Animal Control	Animal Control	St. Mary's County Ordinance 2024-018	LHD may provide consultation, coordination, and support when animal-related issues affect public health under separate legal authorities.
Water Supply and Sewerage System Standards	Environmental Health - Water Quality	COMAR 26.03.01.02 COMAR 26.03.01.03 COMAR 26.03.01.04 COMAR 26.03.12.04 COMAR 26.04.03	MDE provides statewide regulatory oversight, establishes technical standards, approves community systems, and oversees implementation of county water and sewerage plans. LHDs participate in county water and sewer planning, evaluate the safety of systems, review development proposals, and serve as the local approving authority for water and sewerage projects.
Sewage and Sludge Management	Environmental Health - Water Quality	COMAR 26.04.02 COMAR 26.04.06	MDE establishes standards and administers permitting, monitoring, and enforcement programs for sewage and sludge treatment, storage, transportation, land application, and disposal. LHDs provide onsite sewage disposal review, conduct inspections, investigate complaints, and coordinate with MDE regarding permitting and enforcement.
Solid Waste Management	Environmental Health - Water Quality	St. Mary's County Solid Waste Ordinance COMAR 26.04.07	MDE establishes design, operational, environmental monitoring, and closure requirements; and issues permits for landfills, transfer stations, processing facilities, and other solid waste acceptance facilities. LHDs may investigate complaints and nuisance conditions associated with waste accumulation or disposal.
Swimming Pool and Spa Standards	Environmental Health - Water Quality	COMAR 10.17.01.06 COMAR 10.17.01.08 COMAR 10.17.01.09 COMAR 10.17.01.10	MDH establishes standards governing public swimming pools and spas, maintains regulatory authority and oversight, and develops permitting, inspection, and enforcement requirements. LHDs conduct plan reviews and inspections, issue construction approvals and operating permits, monitor compliance with regulations, investigate complaints, and enforce regulations.

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		COMAR 10.17.01.11	
Public Bathing Beach Standards	Environmental Health - Water Quality	COMAR 26.08.09	MDE administers the State's beaches program and establishes regulatory requirements. LHDs process beach permits, conduct sanitary surveys and routine water quality monitoring, issue public advisories and closure notices when public health risks are identified, and conduct local enforcement activities.
Water Wells	Environmental Health - Water Quality	COMAR 26.04.04 COMAR 26.04.04.30	MDE establishes standards and provides regulatory oversight and technical support. LHDs issue well construction permits, evaluate well locations, oversee water quality testing, issue Certificates of Potability, monitor compliance with well construction standards, and oversee well abandonment and sealing activities.
Percolation Testing	Environmental Health - Water Quality	COMAR 26.04.02.03 COMAR 26.04.03.02 COMAR 26.03.05.05	MDE establishes standards for percolation testing, site evaluation, and onsite sewage disposal, and oversees implementation of the onsite sewage disposal program. LHDs conduct and oversee percolation testing, evaluate soil and groundwater conditions, determine compliance with septic system requirements, and use test results to support permitting, review, and development approvals.
Emergency Permits	Environmental Health - Water Quality	COMAR 26.17.06.08	MDE may issue temporary emergency permits for water appropriation or use when delays associated with the normal permitting process would endanger people, animals, or critical operations. LHDs may identify public health emergencies related to inadequate water supply and coordinate with MDE and emergency management agencies.

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Ambient Air Quality Standards	Environmental Health - Air Quality	COMAR 26.11.04	MDE establishes, administers, and monitors ambient air quality standards; conducts air quality monitoring; evaluates compliance with state and federal standards; and provides public air quality information.
Open Fires	Environmental Health - Air Quality	COMAR 26.11.07	MDE establishes and enforces restrictions governing open fires, investigates violations, and administers air quality protections to reduce harmful emissions. LHDs may respond to complaints, provide public health guidance, and coordinate with MDE when open burning creates health concerns.
Lead Paint Inspections	Environmental Health - Lead	COMAR 26.16.02.05 COMAR 26.16.05.06 COMAR 26.16.05.07	MDE administers the State's lead inspection and risk reduction program, establishes inspection standards, accredits inspectors, reviews compliance documentation, and enforces lead paint requirements. LHDs monitor blood lead levels, provide follow-up services for affected children, coordinate responses to lead hazards, and support community efforts to prevent lead poisoning.
Bicycle and Play Vehicle Helmets	Prevention - Injury Prevention	MD Transportation Code § 21-1207.1 (2025)	MDH and LHDs do not regulate or enforce helmet use, but play a key role in prevention, education, and injury surveillance. MDH and LHDs may provide community bike safety education, coordinate or organize helmet distribution or awareness programs, support injury prevention coalitions and initiatives, and assist with local injury data and outreach planning.
Bicycle and Play Vehicle Traffic Safety	Prevention - Injury Prevention	MD Transportation Code § 21-1202 (2025)	MDH and LHDs do not enforce traffic laws but contribute to reducing injuries through education, surveillance, and cross-sector safety initiatives. MDH and LHDs may support injury prevention by promoting safe use of bicycles and play vehicles, providing safety education, and using injury data to inform prevention strategies.

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Pedestrian Traffic Safety	Prevention - Injury Prevention	MD Transportation Code § 21, Subtitle 5 (2025)	MDH and LHDs do not enforce pedestrian traffic safety laws; instead, they provide surveillance, education, and prevention programming. MDH and LHDs may support injury prevention by analyzing pedestrian injury data, conducting safety education, and collaborating with transportation and community partners to reduce pedestrian injuries and fatalities.
Child Safety Seats	Prevention - Injury Prevention	MD Transportation Code § 22-412.2 (2025)	MDH and LHDs do not enforce child safety seat laws, but support compliance through caregiver education, car seat safety checks, community outreach, and injury surveillance.
Seat Belts	Prevention - Injury Prevention	MD Transportation Code § 22-412 (2025)	MDH and LHDs do not enforce seat belt laws, but support efforts to reduce crash-related injuries through surveillance, education, and cross-sector collaboration. MDH and LHDs may promote seat belt use, analyze motor vehicle injury data, and participate in traffic safety education initiatives.
Smoking and Vaping Indoors	Prevention - Tobacco	St. Mary's County Resolution 2019-15 COMAR 10.19.04	MDH establishes prohibitions on smoking and vaping in indoor public places and workplaces. LHDs support enforcement through complaint response, inspections, and public education.
Tobacco Sales	Prevention - Tobacco	MDH Tobacco21 Regulation	MDH establishes and oversees retailer compliance requirements under the state's Tobacco21 program, conducts education and compliance monitoring, supports enforcement of underage sales prohibitions, and leads tobacco prevention initiatives. LHDs support community education, retailer outreach, and compliance activities to reduce youth tobacco initiation and long-term nicotine dependence.

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Tanning Devices	Prevention - Tanning	COMAR 10.52.06	MDH establishes restrictions on tanning device use by individuals under 18, requires age verification and consent procedures, and mandates health risk warnings in tanning facilities. LHDs support implementation through inspections, complaint response, and public education.
Birth and Death Certificates	Vital Records	MD Health - General Code § 4-204 (2025) COMAR 10.03.01.02 COMAR 10.03.01.03 COMAR 10.03.01.05 COMAR 10.03.01.10 COMAR 10.03.01.14 COMAR 10.03.01.15 COMAR 10.03.01.16	MDH establishes requirements for registration, amendment, confidentiality, and data management, and uses vital records for mortality surveillance and population health analysis. LHDs issue certified birth and death certificates, assist with applications, and support registration workflows within the statewide vital records system.

