

# Norwegian Board of Health Supervision

## Presentation at EPSO-meeting in Bergen

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2. June 2008

### **Organisation**

Norwegian Board of Health Supervision (Statens helsetilsyn, [www.helsetilsynet.no](http://www.helsetilsynet.no)) is the governmental supervisory organisation and inspectorate related to the provision of health and social services in Norway.

The organisation is reporting to the Ministry of Health and Care, and it is led by a Director-General. The Director General, as well as the Deputy Director General, is appointed by the Cabinet (King) as “officers of the Crown” (embetsmenn).

The resources for running the board are allocated on a yearly basis direct from the Parliament.

The central office is located in Oslo and employs around 85 persons; with backgrounds from health and social care, legal and administrative practice and social sciences. In each county the board is represented by the county governor (fylkesmannen). Employees from the county governor constitute the Board of Health Supervision in the County (Helsetilsynet i fylket) headed by the chief county medical officer in matters related to health care. This unit inside the county governor’s office is reporting direct to the Norwegian Board of Health Supervision. (In matters related to social services the regional work is led by the county governor who then also reports to the central board.)

It is difficult to isolate the resources allocated to supervisory and inspectorate tasks on count level from other health care related work done on behalf of the Directorate of Health (advisory work, implementation of health policies etc.), but perhaps around 120 man-labour years may stand as an estimate.

Thus it may be claimed that around 200 man-labour years are spent on governmental supervisory and inspectorate tasks.

### **Competence and education of employees**

Mostly health personnel in position to become an employee at the supervisory board will be required to have previous and often long lasting experience from clinical work or community medicine. Recruitment of legal personnel and administrative staff is to a higher degree aimed at younger persons.

The board runs a set of internal educational schemes, both related to planned supervisions (courses in audit techniques) and related to handling of incident investigations. Mostly these courses are administered by the organisation itself, but some projects are also developed in

co-operation with universities. There is just now a project starting on development of a common education for supervisory agencies crossing sector borders in co-operation with the University of Stavanger.

### **Main areas and topics for the supervisory work**

Norwegian Board of Health Supervision works in relation to both provision of health care and social care; public as well as private providers are object for supervision. It covers preventive measures and public health work when it is provided by health care organisers. It does not cover environmental health in general or occupational care.

Supervisory tasks related to pharmaceuticals are covered by Norwegian Medicines Agency, which also receives reports of adverse and side effects. Radiation protection is covered by Norwegian Radiation Protection Agency, hemovigilance by National Health Care Knowledge Centre, compensation of patient injuries by the patient compensation scheme and food safety by the Food Safety Authorities.

Norwegian Board of Health Supervision though deals with patient complaints not related to economic compensation.

Authorisation of health personnel is done by Norwegian Registration Authority for Health Personnel, but Norwegian Board of Health Supervision is in position of revoking or limiting authorisations. Such decisions may be appealed to a central complaint committee.

To some, but in reality quite limited extent, Norwegian Board of Health Supervision collaborates with other supervisory organisations in the operational work (e.g. the labour inspection, Data Inspectorate, Petroleum Safety Authority).

### **Legislative basis**

The tasks for Norwegian Board of Health Supervision are defined by a number of acts from the Parliament. The organisation's main aim is defined by the act on health care supervision from 1984.

The tasks related to patient complaints are defined in the act on patient's rights. The tasks related to health personnel are defined in the act on health personnel. A number of tasks related to the provision of services are defined in the acts on provision of specialised and primary health care.

The different acts also define the relevant measures of power under certain circumstances. E.g. related to provision of specialised health care Norwegian Board of Health Supervision may issue fines if legal requirements are broken. This measure, though, is not possible to use related to provision of primary health care.

### **Main working methods**

The main working methods may be defined by at least four paths:

1. Planned supervisions by system audits
2. Handling of incidents by different forms of investigations

3. Handling of matters related to patient's rights by ordinary administrative decisive processes
4. Surveillance of the health care by surveys etc.

### **Main publications**

The written documentation from Norwegian Board of Health Supervision may be divided into alt last these groups:

1. Reports from inspections at single institutions
2. Collected experiences related to several inspections
3. Letters related to dealing with single cases
4. General advice, mostly given to the Ministry or the Directorate on demand from them or on own initiative
5. Yearly supervision report
6. Articles in professional journals

The written material, except letters containing confidential information, is published on the net.

### **Addendum: Text from our web-site:**

#### ***Tasks and aims***

*The Norwegian Board of Health Supervision (Norwegian name: Statens helsetilsyn) is an independent supervision authority, with responsibility for general supervision of health and social services in the country. The Norwegian Board of Health Supervision directs the supervision authorities at the county level: the offices of the county governors, which have responsibility for supervision of social services, and the Norwegian Board of Health Supervision in the county, which have responsibility for supervision of health services and health care personnel.*

*Together the supervision authorities contribute to ensuring that:*

- *the needs of the population for health and social services are met*
- *health and social services are run in accordance with acceptable professional standards*
- *deficiencies in provision of services are prevented*
- *resources are utilized effectively and efficiently.*

### ***The tasks of the Norwegian Board of Health Supervision (the central level)***

*The tasks of the Norwegian Board of Health Supervision include:*

- *monitoring health and social services in relation to the needs of the population and the demands of society for services*
- *directing the supervision of social services carried out by the offices of the county governors, and the supervision of health services and health care personnel carried out by the Norwegian Board of Health Supervision in the counties*
- *dealing with matters concerning serious deficiencies in health services, when there are grounds for issuing administrative reactions to health care personnel or instructions to institutions/activities (see the example of a case under Our Activities)*
- *directing the processing of complaints concerning the rights of the population to services, for example according to the Social Services Act and the Patients' Rights Act*
- *disseminating information gained from experience of supervision to government administration and health and social services.*

### ***The internal organization of the Norwegian Board of Health***

*The leader of the Norwegian Board of Health Supervision is the Director General Lars E. Hanssen. The Norwegian Board of Health Supervision has three departments:*

- *Department I for Supervision*
- *Department II for Supervision*
- *Department for Administration*

*The Norwegian Board of Health Supervision has about 90 employees, including doctors, nurses, other health care professionals, social care professionals, social scientists and lawyers.*

### ***Organization at the county level***

*Supervision of health services and health care personnel in each county is carried out by the Norwegian Board of Health Supervision in the counties, directly under the Norwegian Board of Health Supervision centrally. The Norwegian Board of Health Supervision in the county has supervision authority only for health services and health care personnel. The Norwegian Board of Health Supervision in the county is lead by a county medical officer.*

*Supervision of social services is carried out by the office of the county governor. In some counties, supervision of social services is organized in the same department as supervision of health services and health care personnel. In other counties, supervision of social services is organised in the same department as supervision of child welfare and other tasks.*

### ***The tasks of the Norwegian Board of Health Supervision in the counties***

*The tasks of the Norwegian Board of Health Supervision in the counties include:*

- *supervising health services through organizational audits, surveys and other methods – partly as country-wide supervision as decided by the Norwegian Board of Health Supervision and partly decided on the basis of local conditions in the county (see the example of a case under Our Activities).*
- *processing complaints concerning deficiencies in health services*
- *processing complaints concerning the rights of the population to services according to, for example, the Patients' Rights Act and the Municipal Health Services Act*
- *various tasks concerning the control of communicable diseases etc.*
- *monitoring service delivery*
- *disseminating information gained from experience of supervision to government administration and health and social services.*

### ***The tasks of the county governors in relation to social services***

*The tasks of the county governors in relation to social services include:*

- *supervision of social services through organizational audits, surveys and other methods – partly as country-wide supervision as decided by the Norwegian Board of Health Supervision and partly decided on the basis of local conditions in the county*
- *issuing instructions when an institution/activity is run in a way that can lead to adverse effects for clients or in any other way is unfavourable or unacceptable*
- *reviewing decisions and processing complains concerning use of compulsory treatment and force for mentally handicapped people*
- *dissemination of information gained from experience of supervision to government administration and health and social services.*

*In addition, the offices of the county governor process complaints concerning the rights of the population to services according the Social Services Act.*

*The offices of the county governor have many other tasks relating to social services. These tasks are mostly directed by the Norwegian Directorate of Health.*

### ***Government administration in the areas of health and social affairs***

*Government administration in the areas of health and social affairs includes the institutions in the list in the section Links. The Norwegian Board of Health Supervision is placed administratively under the Ministry of Health and Care Services.*

*The government agencies that the Norwegian Board of Health Supervision cooperates with are:*

### ***1. Norwegian Directorate of Health***

*The directorate:*

- *serves as an administrative agency and competence centre, helping to implement and pursue national policy in the health and social services sector*
- *provides advice to central authorities, municipalities, health enterprises, voluntary organizations and the general public*
- *helps to facilitate the development of quality and the ranking of priorities in health and social services.*

### ***2. The Norwegian Institute of Public Health***

*The Norwegian Institute of Public Health aims to improve the health of the population by strengthening preventive measures. The institute consists of an administrative division and four professional divisions: control of contagious diseases, environmental medicine, epidemiology and forensic toxicology, and alcohol and drug research.*

*The Norwegian Institute of Public Health aims to provide:*

- *a good overview of the health conditions of the population*
- *reliable knowledge about the factors that influence health*
- *useful advice and services that can lead to improvements in health*
- *legally sound advice and services*
- *an effective organization.*

*The Norwegian Institute of Public Health's vision: healthier people*

*The Norwegian Institute of Public Health's motto: knowledge for the health of the people*

### ***3. Norwegian Registration Authority for Health Personnel***

*The Norwegian Registration Authority for Health Personnel has authority to grant authorisation and licences to health care personnel. The authority lies administratively under the Norwegian Directorate of Health.*