



Public Health Accreditation Board

The Vision

The Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing the continuous quality improvement of state, local, tribal, and territorial public health departments. PHAB is working to promote and protect the health of the public by advancing the quality and performance of *all* public health departments in the U.S. through national voluntary accreditation. PHAB's vision is a high-performing governmental public health system that will make us a healthier nation.

The Idea

Public health departments work to protect the health of people and communities across our country, through efforts such as ensuring access to clean air and water, encouraging healthful behaviors, and working to provide a healthy start for mothers and babies. Despite public health's critical role, there has not been a national accreditation program to ensure public health departments' quality of service – until now. Accreditation is based on standards that health departments can put into practice to ensure they are providing the best services possible to keep their communities safe and healthy. Accreditation will drive public health departments to continuously improve their services and performance.

The Organization

PHAB is the accrediting body for national public health accreditation. The organization was created to manage and promote the national accreditation program. PHAB was incorporated in 2007, and is developing the accreditation program for launch in 2011. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention provide support for the program.

The Benefits

The larger public health community recognizes that everyone wins when public health departments are accredited. Local health departments that have participated in state accreditation programs have reported the following benefits:

- Health departments enjoy increased credibility, accountability and visibility within the community.
- Health departments receive valuable, measureable feedback so they can continuously improve the quality of their work.
- Key decision makers and policymakers have evidence that public dollars are being spent on effective and useful programs.
- The public benefits from enhanced services in their area, which can lead to healthier people and a healthier community.

Public health accreditation aims to ensure that people all over the country – West Coast suburbs, Southeast cities, and Midwest rural towns alike – receive consistent, quality services from their public health agencies.

The Standards

To create the public health accreditation standards, PHAB worked with state and local public health professionals, national and federal public health experts, public health researchers, and other technical experts. To ensure that the standards reflect the circumstances of all health agencies, PHAB made them available for public comment. Based on the extensive input from the field, the standards were revised and the PHAB Board of Directors approved a draft set of standards and measures. This rigorous vetting process was vital to ensuring the draft standards and measures provide an opportunity to bolster health departments' capacity and improve quality of services.

PHAB developed two sets of standards: one for state and territorial health agencies, and one for local health departments. Both are based on fundamental public health principals that build on and enhance public health departments' current work.

The Beta Test

With the participation of state, local and tribal public health departments, PHAB will conduct a beta test from fall 2009 through the end of 2010. Thirty public health departments of various size, structure, capacity and location will work through the entire accreditation process, including applying for accreditation, providing documentation, and hosting site visits. Throughout the beta test, the sites will provide valuable and comprehensive feedback on the standards, measures and processes that will inform the final accreditation program. After the program is modified based on input from the beta test, the national public health accreditation program will accept applications for accreditation.

The Partners

The development of the national voluntary public health accreditation program has involved, and is supported by, public health leaders and practitioners from the national, state and local levels. PHAB is also supported by a number of leading national public health organizations such as the American Public Health Association, Association of State and Territorial Health Officials, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Association of County and City Health Officials, National Association of Local Boards of Health, National Indian Health Board, National Network of Public Health Institutes, Public Health Foundation and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

The Preparation

Health departments can prepare now for accreditation. These activities will better position a department to apply for and be successful at attaining accreditation:

- (1) Developing or updating community health assessments, community health improvement plans, and organizational strategic plans;
- (2) Reviewing PHAB's standards, measures and guidance for documentation, assessing the department's ability to meet them, and engaging in improvement efforts, where indicated; and
- (3) Incorporating and implementing quality improvement efforts in the department.

For more information on PHAB, visit <http://www.phaboard.org>.