

National Public Health Accreditation

What is public health accreditation - and why now?

Disease prevention. Clean air and water. Access to fresh, safe and affordable foods. Parks and green space. Healthy starts for moms and babies. Tobacco control. Public health departments play a critical, but often unrecognized role in promoting and preserving the health of people in communities across the country. Despite the important role health departments play in our communities, there has not been a national system for ensuring their accountability and quality – **until now**. Other community services and organizations such as schools, daycare centers, police departments, and hospitals have seen the value of accreditation. Now, there is an opportunity for public health departments to measure their performance, get recognition for their accomplishments and demonstrate accountability within their communities.

The goal of the national public health accreditation program is to improve and protect the health of the public by advancing the quality and performance of all health departments in the country – state, local, territorial and tribal.

Accreditation will drive public health departments to continuously improve the quality of the services they deliver to the community. Accreditation is a critical part of the future of public health, and as the national conversation around health reform progresses, accreditation will be an integral part of that dialogue.

Who is working on public health accreditation?

The Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) was created to serve as the national public health accrediting body, and is jointly funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The development of the national public health accreditation program has involved, and is supported by, public health leaders and practitioners from the national, state, and local levels.

Why does accreditation matter to public health?

For public health departments, accreditation means demonstrated accountability and improved quality. Nationally, public health accreditation means that people across the country can expect the same quality of public health programs and services no matter where they live – in a Northeast city, a West Coast suburb, or a Midwest town. The expectation is that accreditation will strengthen public health departments and the services they provide, which will contribute to improved health outcomes in communities. Local public health departments that are participating in state accreditation programs have already reported a variety of benefits from accreditation, including:

- **Performance feedback and quality improvement.** The accreditation assessment process provides valuable, measurable feedback to health departments on their strengths and areas for improvement so they can better protect, promote and preserve the community's health.
- **Accountability and credibility.** Gaining accreditation status demonstrates accountability to elected officials and communities, resulting in increased credibility for public health departments.
- **Staff morale and visibility.** The recognition of excellence brought on by meeting accreditation standards has positively impacted staff morale and enhanced the visibility of the health departments.

Interested in learning more?

The national public health accreditation program will launch in 2011 and efforts are already underway to help health departments prepare for accreditation. State and local health officials, health department staff, boards of health, and others who are interested in a valuable, accountable and effective public health system are encouraged to learn more.

To receive updates on the national public health accreditation program, learn more about PHAB, or sign up for the PHAB e-newsletter, visit <http://www.phaboard.org>.