

# National Public Health Department Accreditation

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## Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB)

PHAB is the national non-profit organization that administers the accreditation program for Tribal, state, local, and territorial health departments in the United States. The development of the accreditation program is funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. PHAB is located in Alexandria, VA.

## Public Health Accreditation Goal

The goal of the voluntary national accreditation program is to improve and protect the health of the public by advancing the quality and performance of Tribal, state local, and territorial public health departments.

## Accreditation Defined

Accreditation is the measurement of health department performance against a set of nationally recognized, practice-focused and evidence-based standards; the issuance of recognition of achievement of accreditation within a specified time frame by a nationally recognized entity; and the continual development, revision, and distribution of public health standards. Once conferred, public health accreditation is in effect for five years.

## Accreditation Fees

PHAB's fee schedule is based on the population size of the jurisdiction served by the applicant health department. The fee schedule is published annually, one year in advance. It is located on the PHAB website at [www.phaboard.org](http://www.phaboard.org).

## Maintaining Accreditation

Accreditation drives public health departments to continuously improve their organizational capacity and the quality of the services they deliver to their communities. Accredited health departments report to PHAB annually on their continuous quality improvement culture and associated initiatives.

## Steps in the Accreditation Process

- Pre-application- Applicant prepares and assesses readiness, informs PHAB of its intent to apply
- Application- Applicant submits application and pre-requisites and receives PHAB training
- Documentation Selection and Submission- Applicant gathers documentation and submits it through the e-PHAB information system
- Site Visit- Site Visitors review documentation, conduct a site visit, and develop a site visit report
- Accreditation Decision- PHAB Accreditation Committee determines accreditation status: Accredited (5 years) or Not Accredited. An Action Plan may be required before a final decision is made.
- Reports- Accredited health department submits annual progress reports
- Reaccreditation

## Benefits of Accreditation

- Better identify strengths and weaknesses of health department
- Document capacity of health department to deliver the core functions and ten Essential Public Health Services
- Stimulate transparency
- Improve management processes used by the health department
- Stimulate quality improvement and performance management
- Improve accountability to community, stakeholders, and policy makers
- Improve communication with the governing entity/board of health
- Improve competitiveness for funding

Data from 17 health departments accredited for one year (NORC at the University of Chicago)

## Examples of Improvement Initiatives from Accredited Health Departments

In addition to improvements in the health outcomes identified in their community health improvement plans (CHIP), accredited health departments describe quality improvement (QI) and other initiatives to better serve their communities.

- Improving compliance with mandated frequencies of inspections
- Improving a program with schools that works to implement environmental/policy changes
- Improving communications with governing entity
- Procuring an electronic medical records (EMR) system to gather better data for evaluation & performance management
- Improving new employee orientation
- Streamlining & strengthening process for responding to grant RFPs
- Incorporating Essential Public Health Services and PHAB domains into all job descriptions and annual employee evaluations
- Coordinating with a local hospital for the IRS requirements for the community health assessment (CHA)
- Engaging all health department divisions in at least one QI project
- Providing data to community partners as part of efforts to address social determinants of health (e.g., high school graduation rates)
- Expanding opportunities for community and partner involvement in CHA and CHIP, including better engaging diverse populations

Data from 14 accredited health departments' annual reports (PHAB, September 2014)



*Advancing  
public health  
performance*

