



Beta Test Site Visit

INFORMATION FOR SITE VISIT VOLUNTEERS

BETA TEST BACKGROUND

The Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) is the accrediting entity for the national voluntary public health accreditation program, a program that will improve and protect the health of the public by advancing the quality and performance of all health departments. PHAB will accept the first applications from health departments for national accreditation in 2011.

PHAB has developed the program elements for the national accreditation program which include standards and measures, guidance for documentation, an application form, an assessment process, and several possible scoring algorithms. In order to fully test the program elements and identify areas to improve in advance of 2011, PHAB is conducting a beta test of the accreditation program with health departments. The beta test is putting into practice each step of the accreditation process including: applying for accreditation, gathering documentation, conducting a site visit, and reviewing the site visit report.

PHAB has selected 30 health departments (eight state, 19 local, and three tribal health departments) to be beta test sites, and are completing each phase of the accreditation process. Beta test health departments vary in size, structure, population served, governance, geographic region and degree of preparedness for accreditation. PHAB has contracted with the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) to gather and analyze feedback from participants in the beta test.

Based on reports from the beta test evaluator, public comment on documents, additional review of the standards and measures, and results of various think-tank discussions that PHAB is holding to address specific issues, PHAB will revise the process and documents and prepare for the launch of the accreditation program in 2011.

SITE VISIT

Each of the 30 health departments that are participating in the beta test will go through an onsite review conducted by site visitors designated and trained by PHAB. The site visits for all 30 beta test sites will be conducted during the months of April, May, and June 2010. PHAB will schedule the site visits.

The purpose of the site visit is to: (1) verify the accuracy of materials submitted by the applicant health department with their self-assessment tool; and (2) to seek answers to any questions raised during the review of the materials prior to the onsite visit regarding conformity with the standards and measures. Site visits conducted by trained site visitors are a key element of the accreditation process.

Site visits will be conducted by a team of site visitors. The teams will consist of two to three members, depending on the size of the health department being visited and the number of volunteers available. One member of the site visit team will be designated by PHAB as the Team Chair, who will be responsible for managing the site visit. The Team Chair will lead the work of the team on site, act as the spokesperson, lead all meetings involving site visit team members, and prepare the report of the site visit team findings.

VOLUNTEER SITE VISITOR RESPONSIBILITIES

Site Visitor Training

All site visitors must attend PHAB's site visitor training. This training will be a two-day training session conducted in the Washington, DC area, to be scheduled for March, 2010. PHAB will cover the travel expenses for the site visitors to attend the training, in accordance with PHAB's Travel Reimbursement Policies.

Site Visit Preparation

In preparation of the site visit, each member of the site visitor team will receive all materials electronically submitted by the health department. Site visitors will review the health department's documentation and will score each measure. The team will conduct a teleconference to review the materials, determine potential areas of non-conformity, identify missing documentation, and formulate questions. The Team Chair will be responsible for scheduling this pre-visit conference call.

Conducting the Site Visit

Site visits will be scheduled for two to three days, depending on the size and complexity of the health department. The site visit team will conduct a walk-through of the department, review documents, and conduct interviews. The site visit team will be provided by PHAB with written guidance, a sample site visit agenda, sample questions, a list of items and activities that should be observed, a scoring sheet, and a report template. The team will make observations, begin to draw conclusions, and conduct an exit interview. The team will not make any recommendation regarding possible accreditation status during the visit or exit conference. Also, during the beta test, site visits may be attended and observed by representatives of NORC, PHAB Board members, and PHAB staff. PHAB staff will also be available by telephone for consultation during site visits.

Travel arrangements (flights, hotels, etc.) and site visit logistics will be handled by PHAB staff and/or a designated travel agent. Site visitors' travel expenses for the site visit will be reimbursed by PHAB, in accordance with PHAB's Travel Reimbursement Policies.

Site Visit Report

The Team Chair will submit a written report to PHAB within two weeks of the completion of the site visit. PHAB staff may edit the report and send it back to the Chair for review. The agreed upon edited report will be sent to the applicant for review. The applicant will have 30 days to respond to this report in writing indicating areas of agreement, disagreement, or citing any potential factual errors. When final, the site visit report will be provided to the Accreditation Review Committee of the PHAB Board. Site visit reports will not be made available as part of the public record.

Beta Test Evaluation

NORC will ask beta test site visitors for several types of information. NORC will want to know how long site visitors spend preparing for the visit, conducting the onsite review, and writing the report after the visit. Each site visitor will be asked to submit a form following the visit that will include tallies of the hours spent on each task. The form will also provide the opportunity for site visitors to take note of any questions that arise during the visit and of any standards or measures that prove challenging to evaluate.

In addition to those forms, all site visitors will receive an online survey at the end of their participation in the beta test. They will be asked questions about the usefulness of the various forms used and their overall impression of how the site visit process should be used in accreditation and how it can be improved. NORC will also conduct interviews with two site visitors to obtain a more nuanced perspective.

NORC will observe five of the site visits, where they will take note of the roles different health department staff and members of the site visit team play. They will also keep track of measures and documentation that provoke debates among the site visitors and their methods for resolving them. As appropriate, NORC will arrange for interviews or focus groups with site visitors and beta test sites while on location at the site visit.