



PUBLIC HEALTH ACCREDITATION BOARD

1600 Duke Street, Suite 440, Alexandria, VA 22314

703.778.4549, [www.phaboard.org](http://www.phaboard.org)

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**Contact:**

Teddi Nicolaus, Communications Manager

Phone: (703) 778-4549 ext. 118

E-mail: [tnicolaus@phaboard.org](mailto:tnicolaus@phaboard.org)

**Public Health Accreditation Board awards national accreditation  
to three public health departments**

***Fourteen agencies now recognized by PHAB as high-performing health departments***

**Alexandria, VA** — The Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) announced today it has awarded five-year accreditation status to three public health departments. PHAB is the independent organization that administers the national public health accreditation program.

Accreditation status was awarded this week to Polk County Health Department in Balsam Lake, Wis.; Summit County Combined General Health District in Stow, Ohio; and Wood County Health Department in Wisconsin Rapids, Wis.

The decisions bring the number of public health agencies now recognized by PHAB as high-performing health departments to 14. More than 130 health departments are currently preparing to seek national accreditation through the program, which aims to improve and protect the health of the public by advancing the quality and performance of the nation's Tribal, state, local, and territorial health departments.

Public health entered an era of increased accountability in February when PHAB awarded national accreditation to the first 11 public health departments. To receive accreditation, a health department must undergo a rigorous, multi-faceted, peer-reviewed assessment process to ensure it meets or exceeds a set of public health quality standards and measures.

“Another milestone has been reached, as these three health departments have achieved national public health accreditation,” said PHAB President and CEO Kaye Bender, PhD, RN, FAAN. “Once again, health department leaders and their staff have exhibited outstanding courage as they have made their work available for peer review. And once again, we are all able to celebrate the fine work these health departments do.”

The national accreditation program sets standards against which the nation's more than 3,000 public health agencies can continuously work to improve the quality of their services and performance. The peer-review process provides valuable feedback to inform health departments of their strengths and areas for improvement so that they can better protect and promote the health of the people in the communities they serve.

“In this day and age, communities must insist on a strong public health department that works with them to focus on improving health, not just treating disease,” said Paul K. Halverson, DrPH, FACHE, vice chair of PHAB's Accreditation Committee. “In granting accreditation, PHAB is acknowledging the achievement of these governmental public health agencies as having met the national standards by which all public health agencies can be judged. These accredited health departments represent their communities well in their willingness to be accountable for their performance as a public agency and as a critical partner in protecting and advancing the health of the public.”

The directors of the two newly accredited Wisconsin health departments expressed pride in their agencies' accomplishments, and gratitude to their employees, partners and communities.

"Polk County Health Department is proud to receive the designation of national accreditation," said Director Gretchen Sampson. "Our health department has a long history of providing quality public health services to the citizens of Polk County. It is extremely satisfying to know our work measures up to national public health standards."

Wood County Health Department Director Susan Kunferman echoed Sampson's sentiments.

"I am very proud of all of our amazing employees at the Wood County Health Department," Kunferman said. "We are also fortunate to have outstanding community partners and a progressive and supportive oversight committee. The process of accreditation has been valuable beyond words as we all seek to assure that the quality of our work and our overall performance meets these high standards and the expectations of the residents we serve."

In Stow, Ohio, Health Commissioner Gene Nixon said Summit County Combined General Health District is both pleased and honored to receive national accreditation. The agency is the first in Ohio to receive PHAB accreditation.

"Accreditation recognizes the solid foundation of public health services provided by our agency, while encouraging opportunities for continuous quality improvement," Nixon said. "The Board of Health, management and staff particularly appreciate our community's and many partners' shared contributions that help position us for success."

Public health departments play a critical role in protecting and improving the health of people and communities. Across the nation, health departments provide a range of services aimed at promoting healthy behaviors, preventing diseases and injuries; ensuring access to safe food, water, clean air, and life-saving immunizations; and preparing for and responding to health emergencies.

**For more information, contact Teddi Nicolaus at (703) 778-4549 ext. 118, or e-mail [tnicolaus@phaboard.org](mailto:tnicolaus@phaboard.org). Learn more about PHAB and accreditation at [www.phaboard.org](http://www.phaboard.org).**

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#### **About the Public Health Accreditation Board**

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 national public health accreditation has involved, and is supported by, public health leaders and practitioners from the national, tribal, state, local, and territorial levels. Learn more about PHAB or sign up for the PHAB e-newsletter by visiting [www.phaboard.org](http://www.phaboard.org).