

Talking Points for PHAB's New Work Related to Accreditation of Health

Departments Serving Less than 50,000 Population

September 2016

Background

- PHAB is exploring challenges and opportunities related to the accreditation of health departments that serve populations of fewer than 50,000 people or have fewer than 10 non-clinical FTEs.
- Although several health departments of this size have attained PHAB accreditation, PHAB has heard from other health departments that there is a need to hold some discussions about the barriers they face. Data from the NACCHO Profile and Forces of Change surveys reinforce this feedback and provide further detail about commonly-cited barriers. PHAB is committed to exploring potential avenues to address these accreditation barriers.
- PHAB has received great input already from public health departments attending the COPPHI Open Forums, as well as those who are members of PHAB's Think Tank on this topic. (See end of this document for the list of participants.)
- PHAB will continue to also seek input throughout the project time line from other health departments as there are opportunities to do so. The next opportunities will be at the COPPHI Open Forum, APHA, and state-specific conferences.
- For purposes of this project, PHAB recognizes that not all of the health departments are rural or frontier; some small health departments are in suburban or urban areas.
- This work also has potential implications for territories and Tribes.
- For now, PHAB is describing this work as the exploration of a product of recognition that provides a pathway towards accreditation (which means standards/measures and process). It will be a product for health departments who wish to pursue quality improvement in their work and begin to prepare for accreditation but find the accreditation process and standards to be too daunting as a first step. It is not a lower level or tier of accreditation. There are examples from other accrediting bodies that PHAB can use as reference points to guide the basis for this project. Whatever model PHAB chooses, it will be connected to the current accreditation requirements so that health departments who wish to seek accreditation will be on the path to do so.
- Accreditation will continue to be available to any health department, regardless of size. PHAB encourages health departments who are already working on their accreditation journey to continue to do so.

2016 Work Needing Early Input

Think Tank participants have developed early language that provides a possible description and underlying principles of this recognition product in order to obtain feedback from others. These items are NOT final; they are the result of the thinking of the members of the Think Tank.

PHAB's Board of Directors will take this information, and the feedback we receive this fall, into consideration as they meet in December. They will then develop a more formal concept paper that will guide the specific requirements in the future. When that paper has been finalized, it will be shared publicly. As the formal requirements are then developed, PHAB will put those out for public vetting, as PHAB always does when it develops an accreditation product or service.

In the meantime, here are some of those early thoughts on which we would like to have input:

Definition

This product is intended for health departments who:

- serve <50,000 population or that have 10 or fewer non-clinical FTEs.
- wish to become PHAB accredited in the future but who can't see their way clear to do it all now.
- base their population health work on the 10 Essential Public Health Services.
- have a diverse array of partners whose support they can leverage to ultimately meet the standards and measures.
- can demonstrate their progress and/or gaps in the completion of selected components of the standards and measures.
- can describe what support they need in order to become accredited.

CHA/CHIP/Strategic Plan

- A community health assessment (CHA), community health improvement plan (CHIP), and a strategic plan are basic documents that provide direction for any health department to carry out its responsibilities.
- PHAB's current requirements for these three items are doable for small health departments, with strong technical assistance and partnerships and with some potential modifications (for example, to take into account the data availability and quality for small jurisdictions).
- Consideration of use of case studies, or descriptions to demonstrate conformity with these and other components of the standards and measures as part of the examples, may be in order.
- This, along with the organizational self-assessment noted below, might comprise a point at which the health department would receive some type of formal recognition as being on the pathway to accreditation.

Organizational Self-Assessment

- Some accrediting bodies who have a pathway approach to accreditation use an organizational self-assessment to document a formal inquiry into the work required of the health department to meet accreditation requirements. For PHAB this would include specific, standardized questions about the health department's organizational capacities and about elements of the 12 domains to determine where the health department is on the road to accreditation.
- PHAB would then provide feedback on steps to take on the journey to accreditation, what technical assistance might be needed, and other relevant items.
- These are concepts only; details of HOW this would occur are yet to be developed.

General Comments

- Recommendations from the exploratory process will continue to be guided by the Think Tank participants, but the PHAB Board of Directors will make all final decisions.
- PHAB continues to solicit feedback (COPPHI, APHA, webinars, etc.). The next in-person opportunity will be at the COPPHI Open Forum on October 6, 2016.
- A draft concept paper will be developed for Board consideration (December 2016).
- There will be legal and other accreditation industry considerations, including the final title of the recognition product, to be considered.
- The Think Tank will meet again in the spring of 2017 to develop draft requirements for public vetting.
- PHAB will continue to hold informational and feedback webinars.
- PHAB will determine what type of testing is needed (e.g. alpha, beta).
- Fees will be determined once the final process is developed.
- This process will take time to develop, test, and launch. It has to be developed and tested much like the current PHAB process in order to document its value, credibility, and feasibility.
- The final product is intended as a voluntary product, just as PHAB's accreditation is currently.
- The final product is intended to be helpful to small health departments. Therefore, there will be a toolkit to help small health departments with this work.

Think Tank Participants

- Pamela Walker Bauer, OH
- Liza Corso, CDC
- Andre Fresco, WA
- Roxanne Holm, ND
- Peter Holtgrave, NACCHO
- Karrie Joseph, NIHB
- Jerry King, IN
- Mike Meit, NORC
- Joan Miles, MT
- Carol Moehrle, ID, PHAB Board
- Deb McCullough, TX
- Shirley Orr, KS, PHAB consultant
- Pattie Sallee, IA
- Gretchen Sampson, WI
- Diedre Serene, KS
- Kevin Sumner, NJ
- Shanna Ione Tautolo, Pascua Yaqui Tribe
- Jess Thill, Ho-Chunk Nation
- Laurie Walkner, IA
- Olivia Whitman, KY
- Christine Zoppi, CA

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