

The Seven Steps of Public Health Department Accreditation

(a/o Feb 1, 2012)

The PHAB accreditation process consists of seven steps:

1. Pre-application-

Health department prepares and assesses readiness, completes online orientation, and informs PHAB of its intent to apply.

Health departments should assess their readiness for accreditation by reviewing the standards, measures, and required documentation to determine areas of strength and opportunities for improvement.

PHAB has developed Accreditation Readiness Checklists to help health departments determine if they are ready to begin the application process. The Checklists address eligibility, completion of prerequisites, internal processes, and initial preparation tasks.

Completion of the PHAB Online Orientation is mandatory for the health department director and the health department's Accreditation Coordinator. Health departments are encouraged to have several staff members participate in the Orientation, especially those in leadership positions and members of the governing entity.

The health department must submit a Statement of Intent (SOI) to inform PHAB of the department's intention to apply for public health department accreditation. The SOI is non-binding and does not commit a health department to submit an application.

2. Application-

Health department submits application form and fee, and completes applicant training

The application is formal notification to PHAB of a health department's official commitment to initiate the public health department accreditation process. The application is an agreement that the applicant will abide by the current and future rules of PHAB's accreditation process to achieve and maintain accreditation status for the five year accreditation period.

The PHAB-determined application fee must be submitted to PHAB at the time that the application is submitted.

Accreditation Coordinators are required to participate in PHAB training before the health department can begin to submit documentation of conformity with the PHAB standards and measures. This in-person training will last two days and will be provided to groups of applicants.

3. Document Selection and Submission-

Applicant selects documentation for each measure, uploads it to e-PHAB, and submits it to PHAB

The process of identifying and uploading documents that demonstrate the health department's conformity with the standards and measures is one of the most important components of any accreditation process. The documentation submitted by the health department is what the site visit team will review and use to determine the health department's conformity with the standards and measures.

The system, which accommodates multiple users, allows the health department to work on various parts of documentation submission over a period of time. Applicants must submit their documentation to PHAB within 12 months of the date that PHAB provides access to the electronic system for submission of documentation.

4. Site Visit-

Site visit of the health department is conducted by PHAB trained site visitors and a site visit report is developed

Site visits will be conducted by a peer team of three to four PHAB trained site visitors. The visit serves several purposes: verify the accuracy of documentation submitted by the health department, seek answers to questions regarding conformity with the standards and measures, and provide opportunity for discussion and further explanation. Site visits will typically last two to three days, depending upon the complexity of the application.

Within two weeks following the site visit, the site visit team will develop a site visit report. The report will describe: (1) how conformity with each measure was demonstrated, or detail what was missing; (2) areas of excellence or unique promising practices; and (3) opportunities for improvement.

5. Accreditation Decision-

PHAB Accreditation Committee will review the site visit report and determine accreditation status of the health department

The Accreditation Committee, appointed by the PHAB Board of Directors, will review and determine the accreditation status of applicant health departments. There are two accreditation status decision categories: "Accredited" (5 years) or "Not Accredited." The Accreditation Committee will make accreditation decisions based on the site visit report, including the site visit team's scores and descriptive information.

6. Reports-

If accredited, the health department submits annual reports and fees for five years

The submission of annual reports is required of all accredited health departments. Annual reports will describe how the health department has addressed areas for improvement noted in the site visit report. Reports will also state that the health department continues to be in conformity with all the standards and measures of the version under which accreditation was received.

7. Reaccreditation-

As accreditation status nears expiration, the health department applies for reaccreditation

Accredited health departments are required to submit a new application in the reaccreditation process, and may be required to receive additional training. A health department applying for reaccreditation must participate in the entire accreditation process, including the application and site visit.