

NATIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH PERFORMANCE STANDARDS PROGRAM

WHAT IS THE PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE?

State and local public health practice is the backbone of the nation's health system, but little is known about capacity and performance. Additionally, while there are program standards in some public health related areas (e.g., laboratory standards), no national standards for overall public health practice exist.

- The 2002 Institute of Medicine report states that there must be “systems of accountability to ensure the quality and availability of public health services.”
- *Healthy People 2010*, the nation's prevention agenda, supports the use of “performance standards for the essential public health services.”
- Little data about the performance and capacities of public health systems exist.

WHAT HAS CDC ACCOMPLISHED?

The National Public Health Performance Standards Program (NPHPSP) was initiated in 1998 as a CDC partnership with six national public health organizations. This partnership established model public health performance standards and is facilitating their use by state and local public health systems and local public health governing bodies. The standards and assessment instruments address the performance of essential public health services and were developed between 1998 and 2002. The standards were released nationally in July 2002. CDC and its partners support states and localities in their use of the performance standards to assess current performance, identify strengths and weaknesses, and implement plans for improvement. Thus far, 11 states, 607 local health agencies, and about 20 local boards of health have used the assessment instruments.

Examples of Program in Action

- Throughout Mississippi, the state agency and system partners conducted the state assessment; 81 local jurisdictions conducted the local system assessment; and the state board of health used the governance performance assessment. As NPHPSP recommended, Mississippi conducted the assessments using a wide variety of public health system stakeholders. As a result of these activities, Mississippi has used the information to develop legislation for a capital improvement bond, used the results for the state's terrorism preparedness proposal to CDC, and used the data for the state's Sunset Commission report for a proposal addressing environmental health improvement.
- In New Jersey and Ohio, the application of NPHPSP at the local level has been incorporated into state regulation. In Ohio, the accreditation program for local public health agencies requires all agencies and their system partners to conduct the local public health system assessment periodically. In New Jersey, NPHPSP local standards were used as a basis for developing standards for all New Jersey local public health agencies.

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

- Strengthening technical assistance and training services to promote wide use of the performance standards and more effective implementation of the assessment instruments.
- Supporting state and local performance improvement efforts, which ensure that assessment results lead to action.
- Developing a comprehensive evaluation plan to assess the impact of NPHPSP and to determine how the program can better support public health practice.
- Analyzing the assessment data to evaluate the current state of the nation's public health systems and determine how NPHPSP data can contribute to public health systems research.

For additional information on this or other CDC programs, visit www.cdc.gov/program

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