

Assessing the Public Health System in Delaware

Delawareans will soon know how the state scores in providing public health services. The Division of Public Health (DPH) will lead an evaluation of Delaware's public health system, using the National Public Health Performance Standards Program (NPHPSP). A public health system is commonly defined as all public, private, and voluntary entities that contribute to the delivery of essential public health services within a community or state. It includes hospitals, community centers, private physicians, businesses, fire and police, the faith community, parks and recreation, mental health providers, schools, and others as well as DPH.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) NPHPSP was developed to assist states in identifying the optimum level of performance in ten essential public health services. The standards will enable Delaware to measure its delivery of public health services against the national performance standards, and discover its strengths and weaknesses. This ultimately will allow Delaware to develop a quality improvement plan, strengthen its partner networks, and improve public health system performance.

The ten essential public health services are:

1. Monitor health status to identify and solve community health problems.
2. Diagnose and investigate health problems and health hazards in the community.
3. Inform, educate and empower people about health issues.
4. Mobilize community partnerships and action to identify and solve health problems.
5. Develop policies and plans that support individual and community health efforts.
6. Enforce laws and regulations that protect health and ensure safety.
7. Link people to needed personal health services and assure the provision of health care when otherwise unavailable.
8. Assure competent public and personal health care workforce.
9. Evaluate effectiveness, accessibility, and quality of personal and population-based health services.
10. Research for new insights and innovative solutions to health problems.

Delaware will assess one public health Essential Service per month, beginning in February 2006. Assessment teams will be made up of DPH staff and public health system partners. Each assessment will include an open forum for public comment to provide pertinent information on the essential service followed by Assessment Team discussion and ranking using the NPHPSP assessment tool.

The NPHPSP supports the goal of the Healthy Delaware 2010 initiative to improve health systems within Delaware. Public health system partners from across the state will be invited to participate in this project. Media advisories will be sent each month to outline the scheduled essential service, explain the process, and provide meeting time and locations. Public participation is encouraged.

For more information: <http://www.dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/phsdehome.html>