

Public Health Practice Stories from the Field



National Public Health Improvement Initiative in Florida

Improving County Health Department Functions and Health Outcomes

Developed

capacity to meet state and local health improvement priorities by training 317 health department staff on performance improvement and conducting 53 local public health system assessments

Enhanced

the ability of Florida's 67 county health departments to function more effectively

Provided

resources and technical assistance to maximize performance

Launched

dozens of health department projects designed to meet local quality improvement goals and national standards

Community-based quality improvement initiatives require both broad-based agreement on health goals and an understanding of local priorities and capacity. The Florida Department of Health (FL DOH) implemented a mini-grant program, using National Public Health Improvement Initiative (NPHII) funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), for all 67 Florida county health departments to lead local community health assessment processes. In doing so, these counties were able to complete key prerequisites for national public health department accreditation and use the data to implement various improvement projects that aligned with their local priorities, as well as national models and frameworks.

In addition to providing the NPHII funding used to make these noncompetitive grants available, CDC assisted the FL DOH with web-based trainings, materials development, and the creation and delivery of two, one-day workshops for county health departments on "Assessment Data and Quality Improvement Techniques: Tools for Improving Community Health Plans and Outcomes." Additionally, the FL DOH delivered a third workshop and offered county health departments additional phone and face-to-face consultations, on-site facilitation, email and conference call communication, and dynamic web-accessible tools and resources. A broad coalition of FL DOH divisions, offices, and external partners provided additional assistance and actively collaborated with participating health departments.

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What We Did

CDC's NPHII funding was central to the capacity and workforce development components of the Florida mini-grant project. Funds were used to

- Implement a mini-grant program for 67 health departments, including a straightforward, user-friendly application process, technical assistance, just-in-time training for health department staff, a communication network, and other tools
- Train 317 health department staff across all 67 counties on comprehensive community health assessments and evidence-based improvement planning
- Invest more than \$1.1 million in the field to support county health department improvement initiatives

What We Accomplished

The overarching goal of the FL DOH is to operate a performance management system that integrates, aligns, and reports on state and local health improvement planning. With this end goal in mind, achievements to date that will lead towards improvements in the public health system and public health in Florida include the following:

- Fifty-three of 67 counties have conducted public health system assessments using the National Public Health Performance Standards
- Assessment results are being used in Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships processes and to inform strategic planning
- Dozens of products have been developed, including 28 updated community health status assessments, 8 community health improvement plans, 6 workforce development plans, and 9 environmental public health standards assessments
- Trend data are being analyzed at the state level to identify progress and opportunities for additional system-wide improvements and support

What We Learned

- State-level projects often face challenges, delays, and roadblocks; it was important to continue planning for the program so that when these barriers were removed, the state and county health departments were ready to act
- Easily accessible tools, training, and assistance are key to success, from the application process—which made clear the required components of each possible deliverable—to the trainings and technical assistance
- Small amounts of financial support for local projects, when targeted to support planned or ongoing community health improvement work, can be leveraged to have far-reaching outcomes

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For information about this story, contact

Florida Department of Health

Christine Abarca

Performance Improvement Manager

850-245-4444 ext. 20712071

Email: Christine_Abarca@doh.state.fl.us

For information about this product, contact

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

1600 Clifton Road NE, Atlanta, GA 30333

OSTLTS Toll-free Helpdesk: 866-835-1861

Email: OSTLTSfeedback@cdc.gov

Web: www.cdc.gov/stltpublichealth