

Public Health Practice Stories from the Field



National Public Health Improvement Initiative in Minnesota

Assessing National Public Health Standards
Performance through Self-Assessment

Developed

a process to assess public health system capacity to meet national public health standards

Engaged

state and local public health partners in a system-wide improvement initiative to prepare for accreditation

Achieved

more than 80% participation rate among community health boards resulting in a comprehensive assessment against accreditation standards

Identified

system-wide performance levels using national accreditation standards and priority areas for improvement and technical assistance

Meeting national public health standards begins with the willingness and ability of individual public health entities to assess their own strengths and weaknesses. In a state like Minnesota, with a large, decentralized public health system, it is even more important that players at all levels — state, regional, and local — have input, identify mutual benefits, recognize realistic deliverables, and receive adequate support to undertake self-assessments that will eventually lead to higher performance capacity and data-informed decision making.

Funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) National Public Health Improvement Initiative (NPHII) allowed the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) to offer funds to community health boards (CHBs) to complete self-assessments using the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) version 1.0 national public health standards and submit their ratings and top three standards for improvement to MDH.

NPHII funding also supported key MDH staff resources, including extensive technical assistance to CHBs, which greatly enhanced user experience and participation rates. In this way, the state built system-wide capacity to assess agency performance using national public health standards.

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What We Did

CDC's NPHII funding was central to moving MDH toward statewide accreditation. In year one, funds were used to

- Create a fund to support CHB participation
- Engage 42 CHBs in 78 counties and 1 tribe for participation in a self-assessment process using the PHAB standards version 1.0
- Develop an online platform for CHBs to submit their assessment results, which included the extent to which PHAB measures were met, priorities for improvement, technical assistance needs, and examples of three documents that met standards
- Identify strategies for effective collaboration among multi-county jurisdiction CHBs in the completion of self-assessments and the identification of priorities

What We Accomplished

This project was designed to engage the local public health system in accreditation preparation, establish baseline data on Minnesota's ability to meet public health accreditation standards, and assess system-wide areas for improvement and technical assistance needs. Accomplishments included

- Creating a user-friendly online system that included input from all levels of the Minnesota public health system
- Generating participation from more than 80% of CHBs
- Creating data collection systems to analyze performance and technical assistance needs state-wide (data analysis is ongoing)

What We Learned

In year one, MDH learned that process matters: with a large, decentralized public health system it is important to engage stakeholders at all levels and ensure buy-in from all partners

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