

**Accreditation Preparation &
Quality Improvement
Demonstration Sites Project**

Final Report

**Prepared for NACCHO by the
Wabaunsee County Health
Department, KS**

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EAST CENTRAL KANSAS PUBLIC HEALTH COALITION

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Brief Summary Statement

The East Central Kansas Public Health Coalition is a group of local health departments in Kansas working together in a regional approach to build capacity for voluntary national public health accreditation. This collaborative consists of eight counties: Chase, Coffey, Franklin, Greenwood, Lyon, Morris, Osage and Wabaunsee. Lyon County Health Department is geographically in the center of this region and serves as the fiscal agent for the collaborative. Population and square mileage of each county are included in the table below.

County	Population	Square mileage	FTEs
Chase	3,070	778	3.5
Coffey	8,701	655	6.7
Franklin	26,513	577	9.47
Greenwood	7,067	1,153	4.5
Lyon	35,609	855	27.6
Morris	6,049	703	5.3
Osage	16,958	719	9.0
Wabaunsee	6,919	800	5.0

Common themes that emerged from using the NACCHO LHD Self-Assessment Tool for Accreditation Program included gaps in knowledge for Community Health Assessment and Use of Data. The collaborative developed a strategic plan to address both of these knowledge and skill deficits.

Project summary:

The East Central Kansas Public Health Coalition (ECKPHC), in response to receiving funding from NACCHO for Accreditation Preparation and Quality Improvement Demonstration Sites Project, initiated the project by each county individually completing its own assessment of readiness for accreditation using the Operational Definition Prototype Metrics Assessment Tool.

ECKPHC then identified a targeted plan based on the collective assessment results from the Assessment Tool. The coalition selected Standards I-C, Conduct or Contribute Expertise to Periodic Community Health Assessments and I-E, Data Analysis to address through a collaborative effort. It was determined that the scope of the two standards was quite broad and for the purposes of the grant requirements the focus would need to be narrowed. Standard I-C was chosen because community health assessments can be used as a tool for guiding local health department activity and many of the indicators on the NACCHO assessment tool related to information utilized

as a result of community assessment data. This collaborative's aggregate scores indicated gaps in community assessment skills. Standard I-E was chosen with the goal to improve data analysis for more effective decision making related to community health assessment results. Strengthening data analysis will support improved agency planning to provide quality community services.

A planning process was undertaken that included review of the selected priority areas and identification of the strengths and challenges of addressing each indicator under the chosen Standards. Prioritization of the indicators was accomplished by each person ranking the indicators under the two selected standards on a scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being the highest score. It was decided based on the discussion and the rankings, to address the top three indicators under each standard. For each of the 6 indicators selected, the group determined what the goal would be for building capacity for the specific indicator and identified the impact at both the local (county level) and for the coalition. A plan was developed to address the refined topic areas.

The group discussed the mechanism they would use to formally collaborate to implement their plan and also how they would address working together on future areas of mutual interest and need.

They determined that the best scenario would be to build on the existing public health preparedness and response service agreement and to develop a general collaborative agreement to be signed by a representative from each county's Board of Health and County Clerks. For all counties other than Morris, the Board of County Commissioners serves as the Board of Health whereas in Morris County the Board of Directors of Morris County Hospital has been designated as the Board of Health. The consensus was that the Boards of Health would be willing to consider amending the current agreement to address other topic areas across the region that would increase the capacity of each health department to perform the essential services and move toward accreditation. A revised agreement was developed and reviewed by select county counsellors. The agreement was then finalized and routed among all Boards of Health for approval and signature.

Background

Wabaunsee County resides in the north-eastern portion of the flint hills geographic region of Kansas. Over 94% of land in Wabaunsee County is comprised of cropland and grassland. Wabaunsee is a rural county with no major metropolitan areas and the economy is primarily agricultural. There are no hospitals, dentists, or pharmacies in Wabaunsee County. The county is medically underserved with only one part time family practice physician serving the entire county of 6,919 people.

One federal highway, US I-70/40 traverses east-west through the northern half of Wabaunsee County providing a corridor between Kansas City and Denver. One railroad and ten state highways crisscross the county providing access to larger metropolitan areas in all four directions. Telephone, radio, internet, and television are

provided by services outside of the county. There are two local weekly newspaper services with a total circulation of 1800 addresses within the county. Word-of-mouth and church bulletin communication still provide the most speedy and comprehensive source of communication.

Cancer and heart disease continue to comprise the two greatest health threats in Wabaunsee County. The Wabaunsee County Health Department seeks to provide health education and to promote wellness programs. There are three elected County Commissioners who serve as the governing board of health for the health department. They are supportive of the mission and work of the health department and have a history of collaborating with other counties such as disaster preparedness, maternal-child and women-infant-children clinics, environmental sanitation, and home health care. Wabaunsee County Health Department currently provides in-home services to disabled and elderly special needs populations in cooperation with the Area Agency on Aging. Medication management, light housekeeping, and respite care support clients receiving supervision of health care. Hypertension screening clinics, disease surveillance, and school health services regularly focus on prevention education and health promotion. Healthy start home visits are provided to pregnant and post-partum women.

The coalition has a strong history of collaboration through their Public Health Preparedness (PHP) efforts and has a good working relationship. Prior to PHP the agencies did not know each other well nor did they formally work together as a region although Lyon County did provide WIC services for Chase and Coffey counties, both of which became members of ECKPHC when it was formed in 2002. As part of the development of the coalition, a Regional Public Health Preparedness Coordinator was hired to serve the region. In addition to the PHP activities, the Information Technology staff person for Lyon County serves as a resource to the rest of the region as needed. Lyon County has been designated the fiscal entity for the PHP efforts; however, the coalition plans the budget as a group. They hold monthly meetings with a formal agenda.

A Regional Public Health Preparedness agreement was signed in 2003 allowing for recognition of mutual public health preparedness planning and response efforts. The agreement was signed by a commissioner and county clerk from each of the eight counties in the coalition.

The coalition saw the NACCHO project as an opportunity to move the health departments toward accreditation working on capacity building as a region. It was recognized that it would be very difficult for smaller health departments to build capacity on an individual basis thus having a potentially slim chance for accreditation. However, this project offered the coalition another opportunity to work together and through the results of the assessment identify areas they could work on collaboratively to build capacity across the entire region. This project offered the coalition an opportunity to use the economy of scale to address gaps in capacity.

ECKPHC has worked collaboratively on a range of projects related in Public Health Preparedness, including development of Standard Operating Guides, regional table top exercises, sharing information on communicable disease surveillance and follow-up, training, equipment and supply purchases, and sharing a Regional Coordinator for PHP. In 2007 the region applied for and received Multi-State Learning Collaborative funding to initiate a Continuous Quality Improvement project (CQI). With this funding the region received CQI training and utilized CQI processes to identify service delivery gaps related to maternal and child health. From this process lack of standardization in testing and treatment for Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI) was identified for a process improvement activity. From this activity the following were accomplished: 1) Training for regional partners; 2) Development of standardized protocols; 3) Regional brochure on availability of STI services. These shared work activities have strengthened relationships among the coalition members resulting in frequent networking and support of one another's programming needs.

Goals and Objectives

These goals and objectives were developed by the coalition through the process described below. More detail on the goals and objectives, as well as completion dates, is included in the Strategic Plan included as Attachment 2.

Goal I: Standardized regional knowledge regarding selecting a CHA tool and implementation of a CHA process.

Objective I-1: By 3/01/09, identify and provide training to selected management and staff in the East Central Kansas Public Health Coalition on how to select and implement a Community Health Assessment.

Goal II: Identify common data to collect and a process for collection, analysis, integration and data sharing.

Objective II-1: By 4/01/09, identify program data categories and additional data needs to build consistent programming and data capacity across the region.

Objective II-2: By 5/01/09, develop written protocols, processes, and procedures for data gathering, analysis and integration/sharing. (Replicate or adapt any that are currently available and can be used across the region.)

Self-Assessment

The Wabaunsee County Health Department boasts a staff of two nursing professionals and one clerical professional. The individual county assessment was completed by the nursing administrator who was actively involved in securing the NACCHO grant and was a student of the Kansas Public Health Leadership Institute Program. The process took approximately 3 hours to complete the on-line assessment and 6 hours to complete the on-line evaluation of the assessment. Using a paper copy of the proposed

assessment tool, the ECKPHC regional administrators had participated in a pre-grant group discussion on possible scoring methods for some of the assessment tool indicators common among the collaborative membership. Interpretation of the NACCHO on-line assessment tool indicators was facilitated by the assessment tool help sections. Partial credit was given when the indicator was addressed through planning and/or implementation but only full credit was given when there was existing documentation for that indicator. Evaluation of the tool was somewhat tedious and difficult requiring recall of a thought process previously considered during the primary assessment. Completing the assessment and the evaluation pieces at the same time would have been helpful in eliciting a more coordinated response. The software did not allow change of one indicator response on the assessment and this response was not the response chosen by the administrator. This had little impact in the aggregated scores but was a glitch in the individual scoring process. Although deadlines were met, there was little on-line or telephone response to concerns and questions regarding the assessment tool from grant staff. Accessibility to on-line support is essential to the timely completion of the assessment tool. The project seemed to be confusing in how to request assistance in using the on-line tool, i.e., requesting as an individual or as a collaborative. Collaborative leadership provided the best approach in seeking assistance.

ECKPHC benefited from the aggregation of assessment results for the collaborative group provided by the NACCHO software. During discussion of results during ECKPHC meetings, each county was open about individual county results in comparing them with aggregate results for the coalition. Due to the extensive work done in the past by the coalition, a high level of trust exists, resulting in a willingness to share individual county strengths and weaknesses. The group discussed results initially and then used the services of a consultant to narrow down the areas of focus and to develop a plan. The methodology for that work is described in Attachment I.

Highlights from Self-Assessment Results

Standard/ Indicator #	Standard and Significance
I-C	Conduct or Contribute Expertise to Periodic Community Health Assessments: The aggregate scores for all indicators under this standard related to community health assessment fell below 2.0. This standard was selected as a focus for the collaborative planning process.
I-E	Data Analysis: The aggregate scores for all indicators under this standard related to data analysis, trending, comparison to other jurisdictions, state, and nation, and sharing data fell below 2.0. This standard was selected as a focus for the collaborative planning process.

Collaboration Mechanism

The coalition agreed to use the same format as the existing PHP Service Agreement. Language changes were made to make it appropriate to this project and future capacity building efforts to move the region toward accreditation. Charters were also discussed as possible options for further defining the efforts of specific capacity building activities. The original agreement on which the revision was based had extensive legal review prior to finalization in 2003. The proposed revisions were reviewed by county counsellors for Coffey, Lyon, Osage and Wabaunsee for compliance with local laws and authority prior to submission to Boards of Health for approval. Significant discussion and review among coalition members occurred prior to consensus and finalization. Because of the past history of the group, no barriers were encountered in revising the service agreement. Obtaining the required signatures from eight governing bodies was a challenge but was accomplished by developing a timeline for scheduling and routing.

Accountability was assured through description of responsibility for funding, identification of equipment ownership, and assignment of personnel responsibility to Lyon County as the fiscal agent. This process for revising and finalizing the agreement was accomplished through regular monthly meetings facilitated by the Regional PHP Coordinator and a coalition member who was using this work as her capstone project for the Kansas Public Health Leadership Institute. The willingness of each coalition member to participate and fulfill assigned responsibilities ensured success.

Results

Because the revised service agreement is amending the formal mechanism under which the coalition has been working since 2003, the revision serves to broaden the scope of work of the coalition in preparation for accreditation and other capacity issues. The revision formalizes previous and current work of the coalition as exemplified by the initiative funded by the Multi-State Learning Collaborative (MLC) described above. In 2009 the region will consider applying for a new MLC grant opportunity that addresses community health assessment knowledge and skills. Successful completion of the work outlined in the Strategic Plan developed under this project will strengthen the capacity of all local health departments as they move toward readiness for public health accreditation.

An unanticipated benefit of the project was the opportunity for each county to contribute by individual assessments that cumulatively formed the regional assessment results without bias of population, geography, or infrastructure. The opportunity for each county to determine its own process for the individual county assessment was very helpful because of the variation in staff resources represented among coalition members. The financial support of the grant allowed each county to move forward individually and collectively without the need to utilize existing budgetary resources. The on-line completion of the document and the aggregation of results by the NACCHO-supported software were tremendously beneficial. Another benefit was having data-driven confirmation of areas of strength as well as gaps.

Lessons Learned

Participation in the NACCHO project allowed the Wabaunsee County Public Health Department staff to take an active role in a national movement toward a new professional frontier in accreditation. Self-assessment of Wabaunsee County's Public Health services reported in a quantified format through the use of the NACCHO assessment tool assisted staff to identify strengths and weaknesses toward building capacity for accreditation. Staff also recognized the necessity for community involvement to guide public health activity and influence public health policies. The NACCHO project served to compliment a leadership project lead by the Wabaunsee Co. Public Health Director to enhance leadership skills in public health staff by incorporating collaborative quality improvement (CQI) skills into the NACCHO project planning phase. Use of CQI process supported a non-competitive negotiating environment for problem-solving among the collaborating health departments. Progress reporting to NACCHO kept the project relevant and timely.

Local health departments planning a collaborative effort should consider establishing and maintaining a regular meeting schedule with a high level of commitment by all for regular attendance. In addition, the assignment of someone to facilitate the process, including setting agenda, running the meeting, and completing meeting minutes is essential. For ECKPHC this role is fulfilled by the Regional Public Health Preparedness Coordinator. Meetings must include regular, substantive agenda items with relevance to the day to day work roles of public health, for example sharing information about recent communicable disease episodes.

Next Steps

All members of ECKPHC recognize the challenge for small health departments to meet all of the standards for public health accreditation and that working together and building shared capacity will be essential in helping each member county prepare for and achieve accreditation. Wabaunsee County Public Health will continue to move forward with regional collaborative health department partners in collecting county specific community health assessment data and analyzing the data to determine community strengths and weaknesses. As a collaborative, ECKPHC is committed to completing its Strategic Plan developed under this grant, which will result in increased capacity in the Essential Services where gaps existed across the region. Following completion, it would be beneficial to have an opportunity to utilize the assessment again to re-evaluate the individual and collective level of preparedness in order to identify additional gaps that need to be addressed.

Conclusions

The importance of strong capacity in the area of community health assessment was underscored for members of ECKPHC as the accreditation readiness assessment tool was completed. Although the community health assessment is one component of the ten essential services, our perspective is that it is foundational to all of the others. This

perspective was a driving factor in the coalition's selection of strengthening capacity in this area as the first goal in its strategic plan.

Although public health accreditation is scheduled to be voluntary, this grant opportunity focused the coalition on the readiness assessment, and members recognize that in the press of daily work, moving forward on this assessment became a priority because of the grant and its timelines.