

NACCHO/CDC Accreditation Support Initiative

Iowa Department of Public Health

Final Report

1. Project Overview

The Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) is the state governmental public health agency in Iowa. The department provides technical assistance to 101 local boards of health and public health agencies in Iowa in regards to accreditation preparation. Technical assistance specific to performance management (the subject of our project) is provided out of the Bureau of Communication and Planning.

For this project the department chose to learn about how three local health departments are conducting performance management in order to provide the most appropriate technical assistance in this area.

Participating health departments were first asked to complete a self-assessment of their performance management programs. The self-assessment was based upon the Turning Point self-assessment and was altered to fit the needs of the IDPH. These self-assessment responses were used to design an outline for the initial site visits. Initial site visits occurred in February, and consisted of a two hour meeting at each health department. During the initial site visits, information was gathered about the department's utilization of performance management and quality improvement activities.

Next the departments were asked to submit evidence of their compliance with Domain 9 of the PHAB standards. A second site visit was conducted in April and conversation was focused upon the evidence submitted and built upon information gathered during the initial site visits.

Case studies were written to document the findings in each of the participating health departments. These case studies will be used to influence the development of technical assistance about performance management to be provided by the Bureau of Communication and Planning.

IDPH was assisted by a Graduate Research Assistant from the University of Iowa in conducting the site visits, and writing the case studies.

2. Reflections: Successes, Challenges, and Lessons Learned

The three counties involved in this project were eager to participate in the project because their participation would shape desired performance management resources. They also welcomed the opportunity to receive suggestions about how they might improve upon their ability to meet the standards. This made the project successful. Additionally, the project was successful because the project staff worked to balance the needs of local agencies with the capacity of the department to conduct technical assistance. Limitations were shared with participating counties so that appropriate

recommendations could be made.

One of the main project challenges was that the three participating departments were all in different stages of performance management and quality improvement. It was difficult to standardize the questions for each site visit, and this was addressed by asking more reflective questions during the site visits. It was also challenging for agencies to determine which piece of submitted evidence was correlated with which PHAB Domain 9 standard because upon submission. This was addressed during the second site visit when pieces of evidence and their correlated standards were discussed in collaboration with participating departments to ensure that the evidence was assigned to the correct standard.

There were several lessons learned from this project, the first being that it is important to ensure that local departments have a common definition of performance management and the components of performance management. Secondly, it is important to understand that not all of the departments are at the same level of performance management and there is a need to design training for several levels of performance management. Finally, the agencies were receptive to feedback about evidence that had been reviewed, and were glad to have the feedback. While this is time intensive, the effort is appreciated.

3. Impact and Next Steps

This project had a significant impact on the Iowa Department of Public Health's plans for performance management and quality improvement training and technical assistance. The project allowed IDPH to determine the participating departments' level of performance management and their opinions about what should be included in training and technical assistance from IDPH. Participating departments would like uniform performance management definitions. They would also like IDPH to provide performance management literature and examples that are specific to county health departments. Additionally, they requested a training curriculum that offers step by step instructions and suggestions on how to design and implement a performance management system that can be tailored to a department's current performance management status and size. Curriculum should also include a website where public health practitioners can access public health related performance management templates and examples.

To date, the project has increased awareness of the importance of performance management and quality improvement utilization and the need for technical assistance in this area. It has also helped prepare the three participating health departments for PHAB and Iowa accreditation. By participating in this project, the three departments have increased their understanding of performance management and have become more prepared to implement performance management.

In the next year to two years, IDPH will continue to provide quality improvement training, and will begin to provide performance management curriculum training and technical assistance. One of the first performance management resources to be provided will be a readiness assessment that a local agency can use to identify gaps in their ability to carry out performance management.