

01-02

STATEMENT OF POLICY

Performance Standards and Measurement

Policy

The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) supports performance standards for local public health systems (LPHS) as a means for advancing the overall quality and accountability of local public health practice. NACCHO supports National Public Health Performance Standards (NPHPS) local instrument as a tool for measuring system capacity and informing quality improvement efforts at the system level. Further, NACCHO supports the use of Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP) as a strategic community health improvement planning process that uses the data from the NPHPS local instrument for public health system performance improvement.

Justification

A performance standard is a generally accepted, objective form of measurement that serves as a rule or guideline against which an organization's (or system's) level of performance can be compared.¹ Performance standards promote and inform continuous quality improvement efforts.²

Improving public health requires the use of performance standards by local public health systems (LPHSs). A LPHS is defined as “the network of organizations and professionals that participate in producing public health services for a defined population or community.”³ Local health departments serve as the “backbone” of LPHSs⁴ and work collaboratively with system partners to assure the conditions in which people can be healthy. A high-functioning local health department operating in a weak system will have limited success just as a weak local health department in a well- functioning system will not have the optimal impact on population health outcomes.

The goal of the NPHPS is to improve the quality of public health practice and the performance of public health systems. Comprehensive efforts to improve local health department agency performance will be limited without consideration of the LPHS. Similarly, LPHS performance improvement requires an assessment and consideration of the local health department. The NPHPS local assessment process provides an opportunity for local health departments and their LPHS partners to learn about each other's unique roles and responsibilities as members of the LPHS; assess their collective capacity against optimal standards; and initiate quality improvement efforts based on the results of the assessment. The NPHPS assessment process is an essential step towards advancing the quality and accountability of local public health practice and, ultimately, improving the health of communities.



References

1. Turning Point National Program Office. (1999). *Guidebook for Performance Measures*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington.
2. “Continuous quality improvement is an ongoing effort to improve the efficiency, effectiveness, quality, or performance of services, processes, capacities, outcomes. These efforts can seek “incremental” improvement over time or “breakthrough” all at once.” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Public Health Performance Standards Program. (2007). *Acronyms, Glossary, and Reference Terms*.
3. Novick L. F. and Mays G. P., Eds. (2001). *Public Health Administration: Principles for population-based management*. Gaithersburg, MD: Aspen Publishers, Inc.
4. Institute of Medicine of the National Academies Committee on Assuring the Health of the Public in the 21st Century, Board on Health Promotion and Disease Prevention. (2003). *The Future of the Public’s Health in the 21st Century*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.

Record of Action

Proposed by NACCHO Performance Improvement Workgroup

Approved by NACCHO Board of Directors March 1, 2001

Updated November 2009

Updated January 2016