

04-06

## STATEMENT OF POLICY

### Voluntary Accreditation of Local Health Departments

#### Policy

The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO):

- Supports the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) voluntary national accreditation program as a means to continuously improve the performance of local health departments;
- Encourages all local health departments to engage in accreditation preparation activities as part of their performance improvement efforts;
- Supports ongoing research to determine whether PHAB's structure and processes drive continuous improvement in the performance of local health departments and to investigate the link between accredited health departments, greater efficiencies, and improved health outcomes;
- Supports an accreditation program that holds every local health department, regardless of size, structure, or governance, to the same standards and review process;
- Supports affordable accreditation fees for local health departments;
- Encourages PHAB to revise all aspects of the accreditation program, when appropriate, as part of its own ongoing continuous quality improvement process, including continued dialogue with stakeholders and sharing of research findings;
- Promotes increased, sustained, and sufficient financial and other investments in local health departments as a means to build capacity, workforce, and agency infrastructure;
- Promotes the development and provision of incentives to encourage application to PHAB, efforts to align with and meet PHAB standards, and benefits to accredited health departments without penalty to non-accredited health departments and;
- Encourages the continued support of national partner organizations to provide technical support and assistance to health departments.

#### Justification

The PHAB voluntary national accreditation program has the potential to continuously improve the performance of local health departments and to demonstrate a form of public accountability to governing bodies, policymakers, and communities' served.<sup>1-4</sup>

Accreditation should be looked at as an investment by local health departments and their governing entities. Accreditation programs for other local government services, including law enforcement and fire, have shown that accreditation holds the potential to improve a department and its services, making it more cost efficient.<sup>5, 6</sup>



PHAB launched its voluntary national accreditation program in September 2011. The movement towards this program was driven by several factors, including two IOM reports, *The Future of Public Health* (1988) and *The Future of Public Health in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (2002), both of which encouraged accreditation as a way to strengthen governmental public health infrastructure.<sup>7, 8</sup> The IOM report *For the Public's Health: Revitalizing Law and Policy to Meet New Challenges* (2011) includes a recommendation for public health accreditation through PHAB's program.<sup>9</sup>

NACCHO has supported the movement towards accreditation for many years as part of a desire to promote the consistency of and accountability for the delivery and provision of services by local health departments. This support included the development of the *Blueprint for a Healthy Community: A Guide for Local Health Departments* and the *Operational Definition of a Functional Local Health Department*; participation in the Steering Committee for the *Exploring Accreditation* report; and backing the establishment of PHAB in 2007, in conjunction with the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials, the National Association of Local Boards of Health, and the American Public Health Association.<sup>10, 11, 4</sup>

NACCHO supports PHAB and its goals to improve and protect the public's health through continuous quality improvement, with the hope that future research will confirm the link between accreditation and improved health outcomes. NACCHO recognizes the potential for local health departments to leverage other national initiatives, including the IRS Community Benefit regulations, Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships, Healthy People 2020, and the National Prevention Strategy, to assist them in building partnerships and aligning current work with accreditation.<sup>12-14</sup>

## **References**

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**Record of Action**

*Proposed by NACCHO Performance Improvement Workgroup*

*Adopted by NACCHO Board of Directors*

*July 14, 2004*

*Updated July 2005*

*Updated July 2009*

*Updated July 2012*

*Updated January 2016*