

Helping Local Health Officials Integrate Processes for Performance Improvement



Introduction

Many local health officials are deciding which standards and improvement processes to implement in their efforts to prepare for voluntary national accreditation of local health departments (LHDs). Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP) and the embedded National Public Health Performance Standards Program (NPHPSP) local public health system assessment instrument present a unique opportunity for LHDs to conduct accreditation preparation activities while advancing the performance and capacity of their local public health system.¹ This fact sheet explores the relationships among MAPP, NPHPSP, and the Public Health Accreditation Board's (PHAB's) draft accreditation standards and illustrates how LHDs can use outputs of MAPP and NPHPSP to fulfill accreditation standards and measures and thereby prepare for accreditation.²

What is voluntary national accreditation of local health departments?

The goal of voluntary national accreditation is to improve and protect the health of every community by advancing the quality and performance of public health departments. PHAB, the accrediting body for national public health accreditation, has established eligibility requirements for application; to be eligible for accreditation application, LHDs must submit a current strategic plan, community health assessment, and community health improvement plan.³

What is MAPP?

MAPP is a community-wide strategic planning process for improving community health and strengthening local public health systems. Facilitated by public health leadership, MAPP provides a framework that helps communities use assessment data to prioritize public health issues; identify resources for addressing them; and develop, implement, and evaluate health improvement plans. The MAPP process does not create a strategic plan for the LHD; rather, MAPP results in the development and execution of community health assessments and a community health improvement plan for the entire community, two of the three prerequisites for accreditation.

What is NPHPSP?

The NPHPSP is a national initiative that has developed National Public Health Performance Standards for state and local public health systems and for public health governing bodies. The NPHPSP local instrument assesses the capacity of the local public health system to provide the 10 Essential Public Health Services (10 EPHS).⁴ The local assessment helps users answer questions such as, "What are the components, activities, competencies, and capacities of our local public health system?" and "How well are the 10 EPHS being provided in our system?" The dialogue that occurs in answering these questions helps identify strengths and weaknesses within the system. LHDs can then use this information to improve planning, coordination, and delivery of public health activities. The NPHPSP local instrument is used to complete the local public health system assessment, which is one of MAPP's four assessments.

How can MAPP and NPHPSP contribute to accreditation preparation?

Implementing MAPP lays the groundwork for accreditation eligibility by ensuring that LHDs have completed steps for two of the three components required for application: a community health assessment and community health improvement process and plan.⁵ Further, implementing a community-driven health improvement process such as MAPP will make invaluable contributions toward fulfilling the standards and measures in Domain 4: "mobilize community partnerships."

MAPP and NPHPSP also support accreditation preparation in a broader sense. The NPHPSP assessment instrument and the PHAB draft standards share the 10 EPHS as a common framework. Given this, understanding the LHD's role in delivering essential services within the system offers insight into how well the LHD will meet agency essential service standards. Because of the interdependent relationship between the public health system and the public health agency, the focus of MAPP and NPHPSP on the system complements PHAB's attention to the agency. Further, depending on the priorities identified by the community, MAPP community health improvement plans and NPHPSP performance improvement plans can be instrumental in accomplishing many of the activities in any of the PHAB domains.

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MAPP and NPHPSP were not developed as accreditation preparation tools; MAPP and NPHPSP were designed to improve the performance and quality of public health systems, while accreditation is designed to improve the performance and quality of LHDs. Both types of improvement efforts are critical to ensuring the public's health. Accreditation on its own may help improve the performance and quality of LHDs, but, despite the need for LHDs to work in concert with system partners, it will not ensure a well-functioning system. LHDs and their system partners share responsibility for promoting the public's health; yet, as the "backbone" of the local public health system, LHDs have the legal authority to protect the public's health.⁶ A system without a strong backbone will have limited success, just as an LHD without system partners will not have the maximum impact. Accordingly, when used together, MAPP, NPHPSP, and accreditation can reinforce one another and move communities closer to the ultimate goal of improving the public's health.

References

1. MAPP's Local Public Health System Assessment is completed using the "NPHPSP local instrument" or "NPHPSP local public health system performance assessment."
2. For detailed guidance on how to leverage a MAPP process—which includes completion of the NPHPSP local public health system performance assessment—towards accreditation preparation, local health officials and their staff should see NACCHO's guidance, *Integrating Performance Improvement Processes: MAPP, National Public Health Performance Standards, and Accreditation*, available at

www.naccho.org/topics/infrastructure/mapp/clearinghouse/upload/mapp-nphpsp-and-accreditation-preparation-guidance.pdf.

3. Here, "current" refers to items developed or implemented within the last five years. Public Health Accreditation Board. *Public Health Accreditation Board acronyms and glossary of terms*. Retrieved Feb. 3, 2010, from www.phaboard.org/assets/documents/Glossary-07-15-2009.doc [case-sensitive].
4. The Core Public Health Functions Steering Committee developed the framework for the Essential Services in 1994. The Essential Services provide a working definition of public health and a guiding framework for the responsibilities of local public health systems. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *10 Essential Public Health Services*. Retrieved Oct. 1, 2009, from <http://cdc.gov/od/ocphp/nphpsp/essentialphservices.htm>.
5. While the creation of a formalized community health improvement plan (CHIP) is not required in the MAPP process, MAPP provides all the information needed to create a formal CHIP.
6. Committee on Assuring the Health of the Public in the 21st Century, Institute of Medicine (IOM). (2002). *The future of the public's health in the 21st century*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

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