

## **Public Health Accreditation Board's Rigorous National Standards Now Benefiting 82 Percent of U.S. Population**

### *More Health Departments Demonstrate Capacity to Protect and Promote their Communities' Health*

ALEXANDRIA, Va. ([PRWEB](#)) April 03, 2020 -- Every day, people and communities trust public health departments to provide essential services that will keep them healthy, protect them from diseases and injuries, and ensure that their food and water is safe. During public health emergencies such as the current COVID-19 pandemic, health departments are a community's lifeline for providing services, information, and guidance that can save many lives. To honor the trust that is placed in them and ensure they are providing the highest standards of service, more and more health departments are seeking national accreditation through the [Public Health Accreditation Board](#) (PHAB). Today, PHAB announced it has awarded five-year accreditation status to 20 health departments. Among the 20 departments, 13 have achieved the prestigious designation for the first time, and seven have successfully completed the review process required to maintain their national accreditation status for five more years.

Marking yet another milestone for PHAB's decade-old accreditation program, Fort Bragg Department of Public Health in Fort Bragg, N.C., in March became the first Army Installation Department of Public Health to achieve accreditation under the new Army Public Health Initial Accreditation Standards and Measures, which were approved by PHAB's Board of Directors in 2019.

"The work of public health never ceases - it's 24/7 - and it is done so well and so seamlessly that it is largely invisible to the public," said PHAB President and CEO Paul Kuehnert, DNP, RN, FAAN. "But this week, as COVID-19 tightens its grip on communities around the nation, people are becoming more and more aware and appreciative of what public health is and what public health does. People are looking to their public health departments to protect and guide them through this crisis, and national accreditation provides reassurance that the health department that serves them has the capacity to provide the highest quality of services."

PHAB, the nonprofit organization that administers the national public health accreditation program, aims to improve and protect the health of the public by advancing and transforming the quality and performance of governmental public health agencies in the U.S. and abroad. Launched in 2011 with support from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, PHAB's accreditation program has become the national standard for public health in the United States. With this week's accreditation announcement, 82 percent of the U.S. population is now reaping the benefits of being served by a PHAB-accredited health department.

To receive national accreditation through PHAB, a health department must undergo a rigorous, multi-faceted, peer-reviewed assessment process to ensure it meets nationally established public health quality standards and measures. PHAB-accredited health departments range in size from large state health departments serving tens of millions of people to small local health departments serving communities of fewer than 50,000 people.

In Hastings, Nebraska, South Heartland District Health Department is among the smaller health departments to recently achieve accreditation through PHAB. Speaking on behalf of the department's six full-time and six part-time employees, Executive Director Michele M. Bever, PhD, MPH, emphasized that "even a small rural public health department like ours" can attain this status.

"We are thrilled to be an accredited health department," Bever said. "We now have firsthand proof of the value of accreditation's evidence-based guidance for performance management, quality improvement and engagement of staff. Through the accreditation process, we leaped forward in our activities around enforcing public health laws and establishing and utilizing an ethics process. Most recently, in responding to the COVID-19 threat, our six full-time and six part-time staff have been working long hours with lots of overtime. In the midst of this, we called an emergency Ethics Committee meeting to deliberate on some emerging issues. We were very glad to have this in place; their input was invaluable to guide our decision-making processes at a critical juncture."

In Minneapolis, Minn., Hennepin County Human Services and Public Health Department --initially accredited in 2014 -- is among seven health departments recognized by PHAB in March for successfully completing the review process required to maintain their accreditation status for five more years. In doing so, the department has demonstrated its capacity to continue to improve, advance, and become increasingly effective at improving the health of the community.

"Hennepin County Public Health is pleased and excited to have achieved reaccreditation through PHAB," said Public Health Director Susan Palchick, PhD, MPH. "The process of measuring our performance against rigorous standards gave us insight into our strengths and identified opportunities to advance our achievements as a high-performing local public health agency. With this accomplishment we are telling our community, our partner organizations, our funders, and our elected officials that we have the capacity to continue to grow and evolve in ways that strengthen our internal operations and community partnerships."

National initial accreditation was awarded March 17, 2020 to:

- Central Racine County Health Department, Franksville, WI
- Chippewa County Department of Public Health, Chippewa Falls, WI
- Cudahy Health Department, Cudahy, WI
- Fairfield Department of Health, Lancaster, OH
- Fort Bragg Department of Public Health, Fort Bragg, NC
- Montgomery County Health Department, Mt. Sterling, KY
- Montgomery Township Health Department, Belle Mead, NJ
- Riley County Health Department, Manhattan, KS
- Shasta County Health and Human Services Agency--Public Health Branch, Redding, CA
- Siouxland District Health Department, Sioux City, Iowa
- South Heartland District Health Department, Hastings, NE
- Toledo-Lucas County Health Department, Toledo, OH
- Warren County Health District, Lebanon, OH

National reaccreditation was awarded March 17, 2020 to:

- Delaware Public Health District, Delaware, OH
- Deschutes County Health Services, Bend, OR
- Hennepin County Human Services and Public Health Department, Minneapolis, MN
- Marion County Health & Human Services Public Health Division, Salem, OR
- Minnesota Department of Health, St. Paul, MN
- Missoula City-County Health Department, Missoula, MT
- Oneida County Health Department, Rhinelander, WI

For more information, contact PHAB Communications Manager Teddi Nicolaus at (703) 778-4549, ext. 118, or



via email at [tnicolaus@phaboard.org](mailto:tnicolaus@phaboard.org). Learn more about PHAB and accreditation at [www.phaboard.org](http://www.phaboard.org). Be in the know: [subscribe](#) to PHAB's e-newsletter!

#### About the Public Health Accreditation Board

The [Public Health Accreditation Board](#) (PHAB) was created to serve as the national public health accrediting body and is funded in part by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The development of national public health accreditation has involved, and is supported by, public health leaders and practitioners from the national, state, local, Tribal, and territorial levels. For more information, email [tnicolaus@phaboard.org](mailto:tnicolaus@phaboard.org).



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