Getting Started. Public Health Accreditation is a journey that involves a process of dedication, planning, networking and assessing your communities’ public health priorities and resources. It is also a journey than can be overwhelming without useful tools to assist you in the process of public health accreditation.

The OPHA Accreditation Tool Kit was created as guide for local, state, and Tribal entities, public health Accreditation Coordinator’s, Administrator’s and their core team to provide practical resource steps on how to begin the accreditation process through the Public Health Association Board, also known as PHAB. The structure of the Gap Analysis tool kit is to be used as a resource only. This is not a PHAB approved tool kit and was developed by a core team of individuals involved in accreditation efforts in Oklahoma.

Is Public Health Accreditation Right for Us? According to the Public Health Accreditation Board, the benefits of accreditation will be determined by identified needs of a health department. Accreditation is a continual process of performance and quality improvement by providing a framework for performance improvement opportunities, to improve management, develop leadership and improve relationships with the community. http://www.phaboard.org

1. Review the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) Standards for Accreditation and other aspects of the PHAB and NACCHO web sites.
2. PHAB’s online orientation. The Accreditation Coordinator and the local or Tribal Administrator should review the online orientation. The purpose of this orientation is to give the interested party an overview of public health department accreditation process. The orientation can be found at www.phaboard.org/education-center/phab-online-orientation
3. Assess the commitment of your governing body for accreditation of the agency.

How Much Will it Cost? As with all accreditation industries, PHAB has a fee structure to manage and maintain the accreditation process. The fee supports evaluation of your health departments application and provides support such as, but not limited to, site visit team of peer review experts, in person training for your health department’s accreditation coordinator, and quality improvement guidance and support for preparing for re-accreditation.

1. Assess the current and future availability of funds to support participation in the PHAB accreditation process.
2. Review fee structure from PHAB. Fees are based upon size of jurisdiction served by the health department. http://www.phaboard.org/accreditation-overview/what-does-it-cost/
3. Contact public health agencies that have been accredited and learn how the process of quality improvement has benefited their agency.
4. Research possible funding available for public health accreditation for your agency.

How Do I Get Organized? Now that you have decided to pursue accreditation, it is important to organize your agency. Appointing an Accreditation Coordinator or an agency designee and developing a core team within the health department is vital. The Accreditation Coordinator and Domain Team will review PHAB standards and measures, supporting documentation, and be present when PHAB site team conducts their review. The Coordinator will also assist with mobilizing the community toward health assessments and plans.

Here Are a Few Additional Ways to Get Organized:
1. Connect with your Regional Turning Point Consultant or a community development specialist. Working with partner’s similar to Turning Point is important when engaging community coalitions in the process of community assessments and community health improvement plans.
2. Explain to staff about the decision to proceed with accreditation. Speak about benefits and how it will affect all staff.
3. Create an accreditation team. For information about how to begin that process visit the NACCHO webpage titled “Form an Accreditation Preparation Team”. http://www.naccho.org/topics/infrastructure/accreditation/teams.cfm
4. Engage local coalition support for community assessments and plans by introducing MAPP (Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships) process. http://www.naccho.org/topics/infrastructure/mapp/framework/index.cfm

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