

# **Alaska Public Health Association Resolution on Public Health Accreditation**

## **Problem Statement**

All Alaskans are entitled to a competent and consistent public health system. Although local, state and tribal public health agencies routinely cope with a variety of organizational challenges and evolving population health priorities they typically demonstrate effectiveness through some form of performance criteria and accountability of resources. Currently, public health performance criteria vary widely from state to state and locality to locality. Therefore, a set of carefully crafted criteria from the National Public Health Accreditation Board can be used to measure performance and accountability. A national accreditation process would provide standards by which health departments could evaluate their performance and assure constituents and funders that programs and services meet specific benchmarks.

## **Accreditation**

We are familiar with accreditation standards in hospitals and higher education, however public health accreditation is new to the industry<sup>1,2</sup>. Accreditation provides a means for public health departments to assess and improve public health services based on the Three Core Functions and Ten Essential Services. In the hospital setting, accreditation programs have been linked to improved quality outcomes<sup>3</sup>. While the evidence for improved outcomes is not strong across all accreditation programs, the goals of accreditation programs are to facilitate progress toward implementation of evidence based outcomes and improved consistency of performance through the application of standards.

The Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) has developed an accreditation program for county, state and tribal public health departments. The accreditation standards were developed by state and local public health professionals, public health experts and researchers, and accreditation experts. The draft standards were beta tested in 30 local, state, and tribal health departments across the U.S. before undergoing a final revision and approval. The Public Health Accreditation standards provide a research based tool for assessing the adequacy of public health services, and provide an instrument for continuous quality improvement in the provision of public health.<sup>5</sup>

WHEREAS: Improvement is not possible without standards; and

WHEREAS: Accreditation in other healthcare sectors has led to improved performance and higher quality outcomes<sup>3</sup>; and

WHEREAS: Public health accreditation holds potential for enhancing public health service delivery, operations, and outcomes<sup>4</sup>; and

WHEREAS: The Alaskan public has a right to expect that the Alaska Public Health systems meet a minimum set of performance criteria;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Alaska Public Health Association supports the exploration of Public Health Accreditation feasibility, including an analysis of fiscal impact in Alaska.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Alaska Public Health Association will submit an application for the 2013 American Public Health Association Accreditation RFP.

- <sup>1</sup> Mays GP. Can accreditation work in public health? Lessons from other service industries. Working paper prepared for the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. November 2004. Available at: <http://www.phaboard.org/wp-content/uploads/CanAccreditationWorkinPublicHealth.pdf>. Accessed December 17, 2012.
- <sup>2</sup> Turnock BJ, Handler AS. From measuring to improving public health. *Ann Rev Public Health*. 1997;18:261–282.
- <sup>3</sup> Schmaltz, S. P., Williams, S. C., Chassin, M. R., Loeb, J. M. and Wachter, R. M. (2011), Hospital performance trends on national quality measures and the association with joint commission accreditation. *J. Hosp. Med.*, 6: 454–461. doi: 10.1002/jhm.90
- <sup>4</sup> American Public Health Association. Increasing Efforts to Encourage Governmental Health Departments to Seek Accreditation. (Policy number 201119.) Available at: [http://www.apha.org/APHA/CMS\\_Templates/PolicySearch.aspx?NRMODE=Published&NRNODEGUID=%7b40FCA601-747E-4190-936B-BBB2DB8CDD36%7d&NRORIGINALURL=%2fadvocacy%2fpolicy%2fpolicysearch%2f&NRCACHEHINT=NoModifyGuest](http://www.apha.org/APHA/CMS_Templates/PolicySearch.aspx?NRMODE=Published&NRNODEGUID=%7b40FCA601-747E-4190-936B-BBB2DB8CDD36%7d&NRORIGINALURL=%2fadvocacy%2fpolicy%2fpolicysearch%2f&NRCACHEHINT=NoModifyGuest). Accessed December 17, 2012.
- <sup>5</sup> Public Health Accreditation Board. Accreditation Background. Available at: <http://www.phaboard.org/about-phab/public-health-accreditation-background/>. Retrieved December 15, 2012.