



# North Carolina

## LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT ACCREDITATION

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### **Program Performance and Research Brief**

In 2010, the North Carolina Institute for Public Health Office of Evaluation Services reviewed NCLHDA program evaluation data and surveyed accredited agencies. The purposes of this review were to examine accreditation program performance and agency performance improvement activities after accreditation as well as benefits of accreditation. Forty-eight of 85 NC public health agencies are accredited through the NC Local Health Department Accreditation program (NCLHDA) final rules. Two additional agencies are accredited through pilot standards.

#### **NCLHDA Program Performance\***

From a review of annual evaluations, program participants indicate that they are very satisfied with program management and outputs.

- 86% of participants (health directors, agency staff, site visitors, Division of Public Health staff) are very satisfied with the Accreditation Administrator management of the program.
- 91% of health directors are very satisfied with the Accreditation Administrator management of the program.
- 92% of health directors are satisfied with the output of the accreditation program given the time they and their staff expended to prepare for accreditation.

#### **Agency Continuous Improvement Following Accreditation\*\***

We surveyed the 48 accredited agencies on accreditation preparation activities and post accreditation activities and benefits. All agencies responded with the following results.

- 46% received additional funding from local sources to prepare for accreditation
- 94% continue to update policies after accreditation
- 50% addressed suggestions for quality improvement identified by site visitors
- 67% have conducted quality improvement activities
- 24% report improved relationships with county commissioners
- 54% report improved relationships with community partners and hospitals
- 56% report improved relationships with Boards of Health
- 48% reported additional specific benefits of accreditation

### *Quality improvement activities (examples)*

*Used team improvement program to conduct H1N1 response and it was extremely successful and flexible enough to meet the changing circumstances of this major outbreak.*

*Improved customer service by reducing wait time and total patient visit time by evaluating clinic patient flow and identifying areas for improvement.*

*We created a "short service clinic" to streamline services such as TB skin testing...This resulted in a significantly shortened waiting period and improved customer satisfaction.*

### *Improved relationships with county commissioners, community partners, and hospitals*

*Accreditation brought forth good press, thus the Commissioners recognized the value of the health department.*

*Achieving accreditation did get recognition from the commissioners and board of health that the health department was striving to be as good as possible in delivering services.*

*It has improved the general image of the department by substantiating the level of quality and professionalism of the organization and its people. The accreditation process and our achievement is viewed by our partners as being grounded in best practice principles and therefore validates the organizations commitment to its vision of being "a model of best practice in public health".*

### *Improved relationships and functioning of Boards of Health*

*Board of Health has a better understanding of what we do on a daily basis.*

*We have developed a Board of Health calendar of work based on the various items that need to be before them every year. This has helped me to have better organization around their meetings and really keeps them reminded of their role and obligations.*

*Helped Board of Health members to develop a better understanding of their role as it relates to the agency's function. More formal processes have been put into place to allow interaction of the board with the public and with other community partners. Also helped to strengthen communications between agency managers and the board members regarding programs/services. Improved visibility of Board members.*

*Board of Health participation in accreditation activities sparked more interest and participation in developing program policies for the strategic planning.*

## Accreditation benefits\*\*

Twenty-two agencies identified specific additional benefits of accreditation that could be organized into 13 themes. The benefit themes identified by most agencies were the following:

| Benefit   | Number of Agencies Reporting |
|---|------------------------------|
| Pride at achieving or accomplishing accreditation                   | 7                            |
| Improved policies and process to create polices                     | 5                            |
| Teambuilding and team work  | 4                            |
| Improved staff appreciation of public health services and functions | 4                            |

One agency summed up much of the benefits and improvements that all agencies reported.

*In essence, we realized that whether large or small things equate out when it comes to benchmarks, organization and structure, staffing (even if some of our staff do several jobs). We can better define, frame, and ...our organization activities related to essential and non-essential services and functions. We are better equipped with informational systems to gather, report, and utilize data in every aspect of our "business" of service and public health. We are more confident as a team with how important we are in serving our communities with a sense of comparability with other health departments. We are better organized, have QI activities ongoing, and have a clear incident command that is at least three deep in some areas to [sic] respond as needed to just about any situation or disaster that may occur.*

Data Sources: \*program performance and agency preparation data--annual evaluations of NCLHDA program 2006-2009; \*\*survey of 48 accreditation local agencies 2009-2010, 48 (100%) responded to the survey.

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