

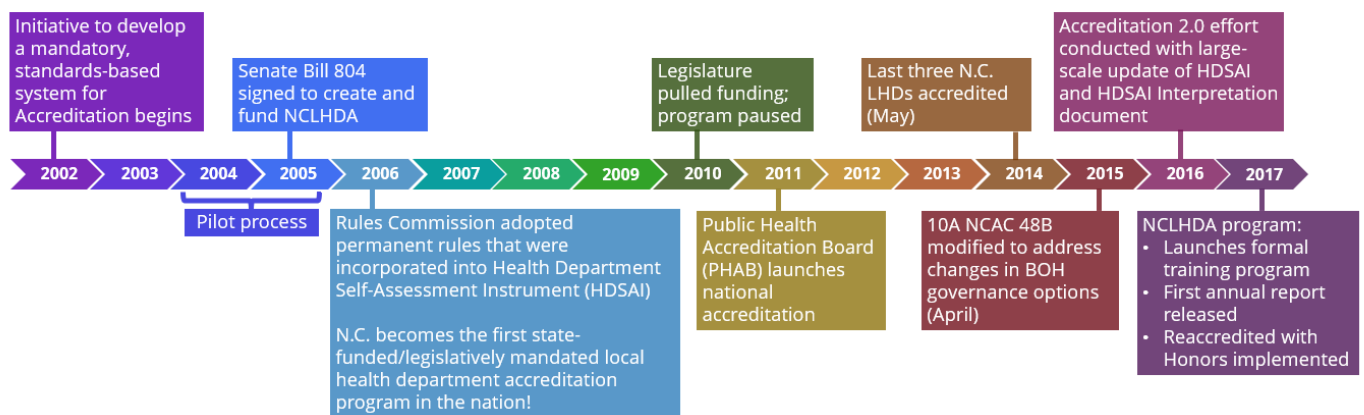


North Carolina

LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT ACCREDITATION

History

North Carolina's local health departments include rural and urban areas, large and small health departments, a community health alliance, and district health departments which represent multiple counties. In 2002, the North Carolina Division of Public Health and the North Carolina Association of Local Health Directors undertook an initiative to develop a mandatory, standards-based system for accrediting local public health departments throughout the state. [Senate Bill 804](#) was signed in the fall of 2005 creating and funding North Carolina Local Health Department Accreditation, making North Carolina the first state in the nation to require local health department accreditation. The Rules Commission then adopted permanent [Accreditation Rules](#) effective October 1, 2006, serving as the guide for all accreditation site visits starting January 1, 2007.



Infrastructure

The focus of North Carolina's Local Health Department Accreditation (NCLHDA) is on the capacity of the local health department to perform at a prescribed, basic level of quality the three core functions of assessment, assurance, and policy development and the ten essential services as detailed in the [National Public Health Performance Standards Program](#). The program focuses on a set of minimal standards that must be provided to ensure the protection of the health of the public, but does not limit the services or activities an agency may provide to address specific local needs. NCLHDA does not create a wholly new accountability system; rather it links basic standards to current state statutes and administrative code, and the many Division of Public Health and Division of Environmental Health contractual and program monitoring requirements that are already in place. Accreditation is achieved by appropriately meeting a set of capacity-based requirements as evidenced by documented completion of prescribed Activities. Requirements may be met by either direct provision or assurance (through contracts, memoranda of understanding, or other arrangements with community providers) of required services and activities. While the Benchmarks being applied are similar to the NACCHO [Operational Definition of a Functional Local Public Health Agency](#) (2004) and drawn from work done in other states, the Activities are specific to practices in North Carolina local public health agencies.

The program comprises three functional components:

- An agency self assessment, which includes 41 benchmarks and 147 activities
- A one and a half day site visit by a multidisciplinary team of peer volunteers, and
- Determination of accreditation status by the North Carolina Local Health Department Accreditation Board.

The program process is adjudicated by an independent entity, the North Carolina Local Health Department Accreditation Board. Its members are appointed by North Carolina's Department of Health and Human Services Secretary. The program is administered by the [North Carolina Institute for Public Health](#) at the UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health.

Current Milestone

NCIPH was proud to announce on July 1 that as of May 18, 2018, all 84 local health departments across North Carolina have not only been initially accredited, but also achieved reaccreditation status through the North Carolina Local Health Department (NCLHD) Accreditation Program.



“Through initial accreditation efforts, all North Carolina local health departments have demonstrated their ability to meet a set of important performance standards. Through reaccreditation, these agencies demonstrate a strong commitment to *continuously* work to improve the quality of services provided to their respective communities,” comments Amy Belflower Thomas, NCLHD Accreditation Administrator. “And the process is not easy — local health departments across North Carolina and the United States face constant and everyday challenges with issues like funding and service provision. Having to tackle yet another project that needs constant focus like accreditation can be daunting. However, through those challenges, accreditation encourages the departments to stay focused on the big picture of assuring that they are providing high quality public health services to their community each and every day.”

Beyond assuring communities that their local health department is providing high quality services, the health departments also see tremendous benefit for their agency and staff. “The accreditation process allows us to look at what has been improved instead of only focusing on the challenges,” states Davin Madden, Wayne County Health Director. According to Matt Garner, Agency Accreditation Coordinator at the Moore County Health Department, “Accreditation not only provides a level of standardization across all counties in North Carolina, it also drives us to continually strive to do better.”

You can learn more about the NCLHD Accreditation program by contacting the program at NCLHDaccreditation@unc.edu or visiting <http://NCLHDaccreditation.sph.unc.edu>.