



Accreditation Board Meeting Minutes

June 28, 2023
9:00-11:00 a.m.
Zoom

Board Members Present:

Mr. David Stanley, Chair
Kevin Austin
Jerry Parks
Ms. Virginia Niehaus
Dr. Benjamin W. Tillett
John Rouse
Dr. Rhonda Stephens

Board Members Absent:

Anna Schenck
Karen Powell
Dr. Susan Haynes Little
Bertadean Baker
Calvert Jeffers

Staff Present:

Jo Morgan
Margaret Benson Nemitz
Faith McHale
David Stone

Guests Present:

Patricia Hunt

Welcome and Introductions

Board Chair David Stanley welcomed the group to the meeting.

Chair Stanley introduced approval of the minutes as the first agenda item.

Chair Stanley entertained a motion to approve the May 2023 minutes. Board Member Dr. Benjamin Tillett made a motion to approve. Board Member Jerry Parks seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Stanley invited Staff Member David Stone to present the next item on the agenda: phase three updates.

Phase Three Updates

Staff Member Stone started by reviewing the historical context of the Accreditation program and how it began in 2000/2001 when health directors got together and discussed a way to show their value as health departments. Various task forces and committees worked to create benchmarks and activities for accreditation and sought to show the value of local public health. Some benefits expected from accreditation were: demonstration of competence; basic level of uniformity; QI framework; decision making, evaluation, monitoring; allocation of resources; accountability and credibility.

Staff Member Stone explained that the purpose for some of the Phase Three work was to adapt the standards and activities to reflect changes in public health including, Public Health 3.0, the Foundational Public Health Services, and the revisions of the Ten Essential Public Health Services.

Next, Staff Member Margaret Benson Nemitz shared an overview of the recent public comment process. Staff Member Benson Nemitz noted that there were 81 informative responses which were mostly local health department staff (health directors and AACs). She noted there were also some responses from site visit team members and subject matter experts. Most of the respondents were familiar with the current accreditation requirements. Overall, the feedback indicated a lot of support and excitement for change while also acknowledging the unknowns. She noted many comments that were related to the redundancies of the accreditation process.

Staff Member Stone then shared some of the feedback about each of the standards, especially noting areas of concern as indicated by the survey results. Staff Member Stone covered some of the decisions that the Standards Workgroup have made based on the feedback from public comment. First, is to consider the language around equity, as the feedback indicates it will be important to come up with a plain language definition of equity and to reframe away from equity language directly in activity language. Next, the language in Activity G5 will need to be broadened to include community groups in addition to coalitions and boards and will focus on addressing gaps in leadership. Activity F3 will become a general workforce development plan to recruit and retain staff and Activity F2 will become a way to identify and address barriers to that plan (of Activity F3) which could include diversity shortages, pay shortages, vacancies within teams, etc. Finally, Activity D3 will include "local incident", or language approved by legal council and a clarification on what are considered "regular operations."

Next, Staff Member Benson Nemitz shared the proposed timeline for Phase Three. She proposed shifting the timeline so that these changes would be submitted to the Commission for Public Health in the following cycle (not in Fall 2023) due to transitions in leadership and staffing within the accreditation program. Staff Member Benson Nemitz explained that some immediate next steps include meetings with DPH staff to discuss CHA/CHIP overlaps, emergency preparedness overlaps, and agreement addendum/program letter overlaps; continued conversations around rules language; and continued brainstorming on how to best capture historical perspectives.

Next, Staff Member Benson Nemitz noted that with staff transitions, the "retreat" idea that was presented during the May Board Meeting will need to be held off until after Fall 2023. She covered some of the concerns regarding an in-person meeting and presented some alternative ideas. Staff Member David Stone asked what the Board was hoping to accomplish during this retreat. He provided the names of some public health leaders who were involved in the creation of the NCLHD Accreditation program.

Chair Stanley invited conversation about this proposal. Interim Accreditation Administrator Jo Morgan suggested that with the submission of the Phase Three work being postponed, this retreat could be held in the Spring of 2024. Staff Member Benson Nemitz suggested that the March Board Meeting could be held in person so the retreat process could be facilitated but that this will depend on the date for the next opportunity to submit the Phase Three work to the commission. Board Member Virginia Niehaus shared that the Commission meets quarterly, but that she'll want to talk through the updated timeline with Staff Member Benson Nemitz before picking a date to aim for submission.

Chair Stanley invited Staff Member Benson Nemitz to share the preliminary results of the Annual Survey.

Annual Survey Data

Staff Member Benson Nemitz shared the results of the Annual Survey. She noted that there was a total of 140 respondents. She noted that she was sharing a preliminary, high-level overview of the data but was encouraged that the feedback was similar to previous years, with a majority of respondents finding value in accreditation.

Chair Stanley invited the Board to ask questions. The Board discussed some of the results, including discussion on the impact of the word "equity" and comments connecting NCLHDA survey results to PHAB data. Chair Stanley noted that the data indicated a polarization regarding the value of accreditation.

Staff Member Benson Nemitz confirmed that complete annual survey data will be posted online for the public no later than August 2023.

The Board ideated about what a theoretical optional accreditation would look like in regards to connections to state funding and other related implications.

Chair Stanley invited Interim Administrator Morgan to share business updates with the Board.

Other Business

Interim Administrator Morgan shared Board Member updates. She noted that the Board is still awaiting approval from the secretary's office for the nomination of Kim Smith and Marielena Moreno-Garcia. She also shared that there had been two County Commissioners identified by the County Commissioners Association, and that the staff were waiting for their resumes. She noted that these seats should be filled by the next Board meeting.

Interim Administrator Morgan then shared the FY 2024 budget which had been approved by the North Carolina Association of Local Health Directors. Next, she covered staffing updates including, noting that Staff Member Benson Nemitz would serve as the Interim Accreditation Administrator and point of contact for the Fall 2023 site visits. She also shared that it was expected to have a new North Carolina Institute for Public Health Director by mid-summer and that the process of rehiring Amy Belflower Thomas' position would begin in July/August 2023.

Adjourn

Chair Stanley noted the date, time, and location for the next Board meeting. Interim Administrator Morgan noted that Board members are encouraged to attend the meeting in person. Staff Member Benson Nemitz explained that during the November Board Meeting there would be further discussion about alternative locations for in-person Board meetings.

Chair Stanley entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting. Board Member Kevin Austin made the motion and Board Member Dr. Benjamin Tillett seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously and the meeting adjourned.

Next Meeting:

November 17, 2023 at 9:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. – hybrid in person and remote

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Benson Nemitz', written in a cursive style.

Margaret Benson Nemitz on behalf of Jo Morgan
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