

# Addendum: PHAB Scope Guidance Pertaining to COVID-19 Activities

July 2020

## Additional Guidance

Public health's activities in response to a pandemic, such as COVID-19, are relevant and timely examples of how health departments are responsible for a broad array of functions and services in the communities they serve. Many health departments have had to shift staff and resources away from 'normal' business to address various aspects of the pandemic and PHAB recognizes that these departments will likely rely on COVID-19 related activities for documentation in both initial accreditation and reaccreditation for the foreseeable future. COVID-19 has been the primary focus of public health departments for most of 2020.

Health departments engage in significant population-based health efforts to prevent and mitigate the spread of the disease and educate the public. These are the types of activities that may be the focus of any documentation a health department plans to submit as evidence for their initial or reaccreditation submission.

This is an addendum to PHAB's Tip Sheet, "Guidance on Appropriate Examples from Programs and Activities for Use as Documentation for PHAB Accreditation," January 2015. This addendum does not change PHAB's policy concerning acceptable examples. The more general guidance provided in the January 2015 Tip Sheet on activities within PHAB's scope of authority does not clearly address some of the nuances that may be present within examples and documentation that relate to COVID-19. As such, PHAB is providing additional COVID-19 specific guidance concerning PHAB's authority to assess to ensure health departments in the process of pursuing accreditation or reaccreditation are able to successfully use the work they've been engaged in as the result of the pandemic as evidence for their accreditation process.

The areas related to COVID-19 examples that are most likely to be outside of PHAB's scope of authority to assess are those pertaining to **individual care and associated interventions, and social services**, as per the January 2015 Tip Sheet. Below is some additional guidance for clarifying what types of activities would be appropriate for COVID-19-related documentation examples that would fall within PHAB's scope. You will also find examples that are not acceptable for PHAB documentation.

**NOTE:** *The following is not intended to be all-inclusive of the types of examples that are and are not acceptable for PHAB accreditation. If your Health Department has documentation that doesn't clearly fit within one of the examples listed below, please contact your assigned Accreditation Specialist for guidance on whether your specific example is within PHAB's scope of authority.*

## Activity Examples

### 1. COVID-19 testing-related examples:

#### Acceptable:

- Informing or educating the community at-large about testing benefits, and how and where they can get tested for COVID-19.
- Planning a testing clinic or testing event.
- Developing or improving a system of testing and obtaining test results

#### Not Acceptable:

- The administration of a COVID-19 test to an individual is outside PHAB's scope of authority because it is individual patient care provided by the health department.

### 2. COVID-19 data-related examples:

#### Acceptable:

- Collection of data on COVID-19 test results, hospitalizations, deaths, etc.
- Analyzing community COVID-19 data to:
  - identify disparities in diagnosis, treatment, deaths, etc.;
  - inform policy and strategy development;
  - identify opportunities for improvement; or
  - inform the public of incidence, prevalence, and/or mortality.

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## **Not Acceptable:**

- Reviewing individual test results with clients and advising them on the need for re-testing, for example, due to documented problems with the sensitivity or specificity of some COVID-19 tests because it is individual care provided by the health department.

## **3. COVID-19 contact tracing examples:**

### **Acceptable:**

- Quality improvement/rapid cycle improvement efforts to improve contact tracing.
- Working with partners to address systems for social, economic, or other issues (unemployment, housing in security, access to adequate food, etc.) for use in contract tracing interviews to improve the ability of individuals to quarantine or isolate.
- Contact tracing investigation protocols.

### **Not Acceptable:**

- The provision of individual referrals to medical care or case management services resulting from contact tracing is outside PHAB's scope of authority because provision of medical services is individual patient care.

## **4. COVID-19 communications-related examples:**

### **Acceptable:**

- The health department's collaborative development and/or use of messaging about COVID-19 risks, preventive actions the population can take, and restricted and/or required activities developed in collaboration with partners and/or the state health department to reduce or mitigate risk of contracting or spreading COVID-19.
- Use of various methods of communication, such as social media, press releases, video PSAs, or others to share messaging about risks associated with COVID-19, preventive actions the population can take, and restricted and/or required activities developed to reduce or mitigate risk of contracting or spreading COVID-19.
- Health department call centers to ensure public access to accurate, reliable information.

### **Not Acceptable:**

- Individual interactions or communications about COVID-19, unless it is part of contact tracing, is outside PHAB's scope of authority because it is individual patient care provided by the health department.

## **5. Other COVID-19 examples:**

### **Acceptable:**

- Working with partners to address system issues related to social, economic, or other issues that are a consequence of COVID-19 (unemployment, housing in security, access to adequate food, etc.).
- Developing and/or enforcing shelter-in-place orders, restaurant/other facility closures or limited capacity, or mask wearing requirements, for example. The health department may be the delegated enforcement authority or may be a partner who assists law enforcement or other authorities.
- Developing systems for community-wide distribution of preventive supplies, such as PPE, for example, masks.
- Developing systems for the distribution of a vaccine including planning for mass vaccination clinics.
- Contact tracing job descriptions and trainings.

### **Not Acceptable:**

- Distribution of preventive supplies to health department clients, such as PPE, is outside PHAB's scope of authority because it is individual patient care provided by the health department.
- The actual administration of vaccines to individuals is outside of PHAB's scope of authority because it is individual patient care provided by the health department.
- Job descriptions that include only individual client or clinical duties. Job descriptions that include both individual client and population public health responsibilities would be accepted.