

Celebrating 10 Years of PHAB Accreditation

Comanche County Health Department

Staff size: 65

Population served: 120,749

Pursuing accreditation was an opportunity for Comanche County Oklahoma Health Department (CCHD) to identify strengths as a local public health agency, highlight areas for improvement, and compare against national standards. Accreditation helped CCHD demonstrate to policy makers, community leaders, residents, and staff that public health dollars invested in CCHD were being used efficiently and strategically.

Accreditation strengthened quality improvement and documentation processes.

The pandemic revealed just how critical continuous improvement and learning from our challenges are. Through accreditation, CCHD strengthened and institutionalized their quality improvement process; being nimble and adjusting to changing environments became standard practice, making the pandemic less of a challenge and easier to navigate.

While keeping pace with the rapid changes in public health, CCHD did not consistently and completely document their work prior to accreditation. Accreditation allowed the department to slow down, consider what needs to be documented and create efficient processes for documentation. CCHD has found it valuable to keep record of processes, decisions, and key players to tell the story of their efforts and continue learning and growing.



Comanche County Health Department Regional Director Brandie Combs talks with students during a job fair about careers in public health.



Staff from the Comanche County Health Department show their support by tying blue ribbons on trees and wearing blue to help raise awareness of child abuse and neglect in Oklahoma.



Mobile Wellness Units parked at the Comanche County Health Department

Success: Shared vision for public health

Facilitating the Community Health Assessment (CHA) has helped CCHD develop cohesiveness and shared understanding among partners in the community. By inviting all partners and community members to participate and forming Community Health Improvement workgroups, unlikely partners had a space to collaborate, share concerns, brainstorm and find common ground. Since many organizations require a version of a strategic plan and/or community assessment, it has been beneficial for CCHD and their partners to create a shared process and comprehensive plan, rather than individual.



Local citizens and organizations meet at the Comanche County Health Department to participate in a listening session to discuss community health issues and discuss how to improve health services.



Health Educator Kole Trent walks with the kids who participated during the Southwest Oklahoma Trails Fest which was organized by the Comanche County Health Department.

Advice: Invest in partnerships and gain buy-in

Accreditation requires a significant amount of time and resources. It has been helpful for CCHD to bring external partners into the accreditation process, for leadership to be fully committed and engaged, and for employees to find its value. According to CCHD, "you will cheat yourself out of a valuable learning experience and your staff out of an opportunity to see the impact they have not only within the organization, but on the overall community's health," if leadership and staff aren't engaged.

Tool: ACCESS Database

CCHD developed an ACCESS database to house all quality improvement projects and documentation. The database helps the department:

- Avoid duplication of projects;
- Assess what is and what is not working with each project;
- Easily access projects, including current and completed and the staff working on the project.