Public Health Accreditation Board

Working together for a stronger public health system

2021 IMPACT
FROM THE PRESIDENT

Public health was put to the test this year as we navigated the ongoing consequences of COVID-19. The uneven uptake of control and prevention measures such as vaccination and masking during this ongoing pandemic has highlighted the negative impact posed by the spread of anti-science and misinformation. It also underscored the health inequities experienced by people of color, with Black, Hispanic, and Indigenous people experiencing disproportionate impact from COVID-19. The massive losses that we have experienced, coupled with the abuse of our public health workforce by a loud minority, has left us feeling disheartened as the year draws to a close.

But if the onset of the pandemic in 2020 opened our eyes to the vulnerabilities of our communities, 2021 taught us that we must lean in and confront the conflicts that threaten public health practice and perpetuate cycles of violence, trauma, and social and health inequities in communities across the country. It is critical that we remember our core values in public health, that we remain committed to the “common good,” knowing that each of our individual health is dependent on the health of all.

We must lean in with our values, our hearts, and our minds to protect our communities’ health and promote their well-being. Now is not the time to shy away from this apex of change – it is time to advocate for an equitable public health system. This is necessary for the future of public health.

Health departments are vital to promoting health and safety and we’re proud that our work in accreditation and innovation contributes to that positive impact. Right now, we have a unique opportunity to begin to rebuild public health systems with accurate and culturally responsive communication, bipartisan health policies, and equitable public health practices that allow communities to thrive. The public health system is essential for ensuring healthy and equitable communities, and health departments need sustained investment, modern tools, and a well-prepared, robust workforce to make that happen. In 2021, PHAB worked hard toward this goal and will continue to champion public health practice, investment, and infrastructure at all levels for the future of public health and our communities.

PAUL KUEHNERT, DNP, RN, FAAN

PHAB President & CEO
OUR MISSION IN ACTION

The Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) works to advance and transform public health practice by championing performance improvement, strong infrastructure and innovation.

Performance Improvement

PHAB supported health departments to continuously improve quality, accountability, and performance. Findings from an external evaluation of accredited health departments by NORC at the University of Chicago were updated in 2021. Evaluation respondents noted how accreditation helped equip them to respond to COVID-19 because of the emphasis on quality improvement and partnerships.

A majority of health departments believe that accreditation:
- Stimulated quality and performance improvement opportunities
- Improved capacity to provide high quality programs and services
- Helped health departments use equity as a lens for identifying and addressing health priorities

As PHAB supported continuous improvement in health departments, we improved along with them. In 2021, PHAB launched three major initiatives to respond to the changing landscape of public health practice.

1 Scope of Authority
In response to feedback from the field, PHAB released a revised Scope of Authority policy to include more population-based services and interventions, and be more inclusive of activities at the core of health department work.

2 Version 2022
Based on substantial input from public health practitioners, PHAB released a draft of Version 2022 of the Standards & Measures for Initial Accreditation and Reaccreditation. The Standards emphasize the health department’s role in promoting health equity and reflect lessons learned during the COVID-19 response, while streamlining the requirements. We opened the Standards for public vetting in September 2021 and received approximately 2,000 responses which will be incorporated in the final Version 2022 documents next February.

3 Pathways Recognition Program
To foster performance improvement among Tribal, territorial, and local health departments, PHAB started the development of a Pathways Recognition Program, which will launch in 2022. Pathways was developed in direct response to the field and showcases our commitment to supporting health departments on their performance improvement journeys. Pathways will be another option for encouraging and recognizing eligible health departments and will measure their achievement of PHAB’s Foundational Capability related standards and measures.
PHAB supported health departments in their work to promote the health of the communities they serve through accreditation, education, technical assistance, and research and evaluation.

PHAB Data Portal
The PHAB Data Portal allows users to gain insight into performance data collected from the PHAB accreditation process and access aggregate data on health department capacity. In 2021, PHAB added the ability for accredited health departments to generate a customized, shareable report of findings.

Bridge e-Learning
Bridge is the education platform that provides one location for e-learning, videos and modules that support the work of PHAB. In 2021, a module series was created to support new accreditation coordinators and a COVID-19 and quality improvement series was launched for accredited health departments.

150
Active Accredited Health Department Users

2,200
Registered Users

PHAB championed public health infrastructure nationally through support of national public health initiatives and legislation.

Public Health Infrastructure Saves Lives Act
In March, the Public Health Infrastructure Saves Lives Act (PHISLA) was reintroduced to establish a dedicated $4.5 billion fund to build and maintain the nation’s public health infrastructure at all levels. PHAB endorsed this legislation as part of our commitment to health departments and advancing and transforming public health practice and infrastructure. PHISLA was incorporated into the current Build Back Better Act which was passed in the House in November. It is now being debated in the Senate.

Staffing Up
PHNCI and de Beaumont Foundation released results from the Staffing Up Initiative, an effort to develop a national estimate of staffing needs to perform the foundation public health services. It was determined that an 80% increase in state and local governmental public health departments is needed to provide minimum public health services to the nation. We are currently working on the next iteration of Staffing Up, with de Beaumont Foundation and CDC, to develop a workforce calculator to be used by health departments to estimate their workforce needed for core public health services.
Public Health Forward
In Spring 2021, PHAB, the de Beaumont Foundation and other foundations and national public health organizations, formed a new coalition, Public Health Forward. The coalition selected the Bipartisan Policy Center to convene a task force of state and local elected officials to participate in a series of roundtables on critical issues facing public health. The task force’s report, Public Health Forward: Modernizing the U.S Public Health System, was released on December 2, 2021. The report includes a set of actionable policy recommendations to guide state and local governments and their public health departments in building a 21st century public health system.

Foundational Public Health Services
The need to build up core public health and transform the public health system was made clear in 2021. The Foundational Public Health Services (FPHS) are being used as a pathway forward for public health modernization. We partnered with George Washington University’s Funders Forum on Accountable Health to review and revise the FPHS model to ensure it aligns with the needs for public health transformation and develop a strategy to support states in using incoming federal funds towards modernization through FPHS. The foundation capabilities are also explicitly included in Version 2022 of PHAB Standards and Measures.

Innovation
The Public Health National Center for Innovations (PHNCI) fostered new, creative, and innovative approaches in public health practice.

21st Century Learning Community
The 21st Century Learning Community (21C) is comprised of 11 states who are using the FPHS toward public health system modernization and transformation efforts. This year, the 21C states have shared successes in securing ongoing funding for public health infrastructure, expanded partnerships, and more. With new funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF), we will be expanding our learning community to include more states who are using the FPHS for transformation.

PHNCI connected public health innovators within the field and across sectors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>150</th>
<th>Attendees</th>
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<tr>
<td>In September 2021, PHNCI held the virtual Public Health Innovation Summit &amp; Showcase, which celebrated public health innovations and discussed what’s needed for the future. We reimagined what public health can be and underscored the need to center equity and community voice.</td>
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<tr>
<th>400+</th>
<th>Participants</th>
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<td>PHNCI is a partner in the All In: Data for Community Health network which focuses on multisector data sharing efforts. In November, we held our culminating annual event, the All In National Meeting. Speakers and breakout sessions focused on equity, community voice and policy in data sharing efforts.</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>10</th>
<th>Grantees</th>
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<tr>
<td>Grantees across public health, healthcare, and community organizations engaged with us as part of the Cross-sector Innovation Initiative to advance population health and equity goals. We worked with the Center for Sharing Public Health Services, with funding from RWJF, on this initiative.</td>
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OUR COMMUNICATION EFFORTS

PHAB underwent a strategic communications planning process to ensure we are communicating effectively and fostering relationships. With more intention, we enhanced our communication strategies across platforms. Across PHAB and PHNCI social channels in 2021:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Platform</th>
<th>New Followers/Subscribers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>442</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newsletter</td>
<td>325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LinkedIn</td>
<td>186</td>
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OUR COMMITMENT TO INCLUSION, DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND ANTI-RACISM

While PHAB has always had a commitment to equity in our work, through convening an equity Think Tank, a commissioned paper on equity in public health practice, and external programming like our Cross Sector Innovation Initiative, we recognized the need to deepen our efforts in this area. Our current strategic plan includes a priority to ‘create and implement a comprehensive anti-racism, diversity, equity, and inclusion (IDEA) strategy to address structural racism and inequity within PHAB, public health departments and the public health sector’.

To address IDEA, we have:

- Created a staff/Board IDEA workgroup that focuses on the day-to-day aspects of our efforts to achieve this priority.
- Completed an organization self-reflection across our staff, Board and key stakeholders and discussed results.
- Identified IDEA specific goals to focus our efforts and developed subgroups dedicated to advancing these goals.

In 2021, PHAB participated in the RWJF Equity Learning Lab program, a program designed to support participants in advancing their equity efforts. We developed goals centered on equity which includes continuing to build a more diverse and inclusive board of directors and elevating and supporting Black, Native American and women’s leadership. We also emphasized equity in Version 2022 of PHAB Standards & Measures, consistent with the 10 Essential Public Health Services. In 2022, we will continue our focus on these identified goals and expand our efforts to deepen our learning, engagement, and collaboration to advance equity.