

## Celebrating 10 Years of PHAB Accreditation

# Franklin County Health Department

Staff size: 55

Population served: 51,682

Franklin County Health Department (FCHD) decided to pursue initial accreditation in 2012 to show credibility, align with partner agencies, identify areas for improvement, and breakdown internal silos. To ask for more funding for the health department, FCHD wanted to be prepared and assure decision makers that they were meeting benchmarks and standards through accreditation.

*In the words of FCHD “why shouldn’t we be [accredited]?”*

**Accreditation supported quality improvement, transformation and staff morale.**

*“The list may be shorter with what accreditation hasn’t helped with...!”  
– Franklin County Health Department*

FCHD has implemented many initiatives and responded to many public health issues that stemmed from lessons and practices learned during the accreditation process:

- **Quality Improvement (QI):** Rapid QI process helped with FCHD’s H1N1 vaccination events, Hepatitis A response, and ultimately the COVID-19 vaccination and testing response. QI projects led to successful processes with each response, preparing the health department to respond quickly to public health emergencies.
- **Public health transformation:** Transformation requires all health departments to have a Community Health Assessment, Improvement Plan, Strategic Plan, and others. Through accreditation, FCHD already has those plans in place and staff are familiar with their concepts, which prepares the department for alignment of transformation efforts across Kentucky.
- **Surveillance:** Based on an opportunity for improvement identified in the initial accreditation report, FCHD developed a QI project for disease surveillance. The processes developed during this project has been in place for 10 years, leading to a better response through the COVID-19 disease investigation.

Staff morale and retention was a big issue prior to accreditation. Accreditation provided many opportunities to FCHD staff including conference presentations and travel, bonuses, reclassifications and more. The steps taken to achieve accreditation led some staff and departments to have major QI wins and they were able to share with others through conference presentations. In addition, FCHD celebrates being a “Nacho Average Health Department,” a nacho bar party to celebrate the department’s successes and begin visioning for the future.



FCHD staff with Kentucky's Governor, Andy Beshear

## Success: Funding, federal grants, and communications

FCHD has been the recipient of two large federal grants for primary prevention. As a result of accreditation, the department was able to list that they were accredited and meeting national standards, and had all the data collected (from the community health assessment as well as statewide data) and available for the grant applications. Accreditation has helped the department prepare to manage and implement such large grants within their agency and community.

Accreditation has also helped in supporting funding requests to local law makers. FCHD was able to state that they were accredited, maintained accreditation over the years, and demonstrate through the annual report how they were responding to community needs with tax dollars.

FCHD integrated branding and communications in plans, policies, social media, etc., which helped them uphold positive brand identity within the community during the pandemic.

## Advice: Take it slow.

Accreditation is very doable – just take it slow, according to FCHD. Accreditation fees are justified by the quality improvement the health department gains from the process. It is also important to create a multidisciplinary team to serve as your accreditation team to break down any silos that may exist in the department.

## Resource: Annual Report Calendar

Since accreditation, FCHD has created an annual report calendar that is sent to community partners and other key stakeholders. This is an opportunity for the department to highlight their great work and successes, and is an opportunity to share public health laws, service statistics and seek feedback from the community.