

## Celebrating 10 Years of PHAB Accreditation

# Northern Kentucky Independent District Health Department

Staff size: 140

Population served: 420,000

Northern Kentucky Independent District Health Department (NKY Health) has always been driven to be a leader in public health and perform the 10 Essential Public Health Services at an elevated capacity. When national accreditation was announced as a new means to improve department operations and service provision, while showcasing the already high performing staff and programs, the decision was made to strive to be among the first to accomplish the feat.

### Accreditation helped formalize processes, practices, and policies.

NKY Health has always invested great effort into keeping up with changes in public health and the needs of those we serve, consistently looking for ways to be innovative and address challenges and opportunities. Accreditation helped document and formalize processes, and assisted in planning and standardizing how these efforts were documented. Aspects taken from the accreditation experience also helped direct the department to look for ways to incorporate successful practices that may have been occurring in one program, across other divisions and programs.

The accreditation process has been a good tool to assist NKY Health in formalizing common practices and policies utilized to evaluate programs and document quality improvement efforts. Prior to accreditation, quality improvement processes were informal and consisted of conversations that occurred after the completion of a program, project or service. Staff would review internally and externally what worked well and what didn't and document it through meeting summaries or in the creation of program plans for the next year. The accreditation process standardized the process by which the department implements quality improvement and documents actions.



### **Success: Attracting highly qualified candidates.**

The recognition of being in the first PHAB accreditation cohort and maintaining accreditation over time has been a benefit in attracting highly qualified candidates that eventually resulted in the hire of our most recent District Director of Health.

### **Advice: Gather information and talk to others**

Preparing to apply for accreditation can be daunting and a real challenge, according to NKY Health. It is important to gather as much information as possible about the process, talk to others that have already been through accreditation, and start building an internal team early with a lead to drive the effort. It will take time, patience, and considerable input - remember to get assistance from PHAB when working through the steps.

### **Resource: Performance Management and QI Document**

NKY Health utilizes a document that allows divisions or program units to define, follow, and report on performance management objectives and QI projects. This document ensures all staff are knowledgeable about health department goals and allows staff to input information on progress. Quarterly meetings are held for directors to review the data and progress and provide ideas and feedback to keep items on track.