

## Celebrating 10 Years of PHAB Accreditation

# Oklahoma State Department of Health

Staff size: 2000

Population served: 3.94 million

The Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH) wanted to be an early adopter of accreditation and be a frontrunner in the state and communities they serve. The department had full leadership support that recognized the value of accreditation and its importance to public health. Accreditation provided, and continues to present, an opportunity to continuously improve, achieve, and maintain an ongoing state of accreditation readiness to ensure the department is prepared to respond to emerging health challenges, as well as to demonstrate excellence in carrying out public health core functions.

***"PHAB accreditation has provided an objective lens through which we can truly evaluate our effectiveness as a public health agency. Rooted in continuous process improvement, accreditation encourages us to self-identify opportunities for improvement and then document the journey to excellence. Further, the process ensures a comprehensive and systematic approach to the discipline, ensuring a steadfast approach to meeting the public's needs."***

*-Keith Reed, Oklahoma Commissioner of Health*

### Accreditation helped examine, standardize, and improve procedures and practices.

Accreditation, and the ongoing mindset of maintaining accreditation, has helped OSDH address complex problems and develop community partnerships to improve health and equity. This led to innovation in creating new practices to improve efficiency, effectiveness, and quality. Accreditation, along with innovation and quality improvement, pushed the health department to thoroughly examine and analyze core processes, strategic plans, health assessments, and health outcomes.

Accreditation brought to light the lack of modern and standardized data systems, documented procedures, and systemic policies. The accreditation process gave the OSDH a sense of urgency to get processes and practices in order and maintain them. Additionally, establishing baselines and key performance indicators have been important in measuring progress, measuring results and prioritizing critical areas for improvement. Establishing and documenting policies, procedures, systemic processes, and frameworks have also been fundamental in managing emerging issues such as COVID-19.

### Success: "STAT" teams for quality improvement and transformation.

Through the initial accreditation process, the OSDH developed what was then referred to as Strategic Targeted Action Teams (STAT) to manage projects as quickly and efficiently as possible. STAT teams convened regularly to share updates and progress which improved accountability and transparency. Internal teams focused on improvements in efficiency and effectiveness of core processes while external teams, which included community partners, businesses, Tribes, and others, worked to improve public health outcomes, strengthen the health department's relationship with key partners, and enhance the utilization of resources.

Maintaining accreditation year over year fosters a culture of quality improvement throughout the health department and the state. The COVID-19 pandemic was a reminder to the OSDH to stay accreditation ready. In 2021, the OSDH revamped the STAT team (founded ten years ago) to become the Transformation Office to focus on transformation initiatives in the areas of 'strengthening the core,' 'managing the portfolio,' and 'innovating public health' and to include principles established during the initial accreditation process.

### Advice: Keep the people you serve in mind.

The accreditation process is not easy initially, but well worth the effort. The OSDH recommends being prepared to take a good look at your health department infrastructure and expect to see what is working and what could be improved. Throughout the process, it is important to keep the end goal in mind: to make things better for the people you serve. Accreditation means much more than achieving a seal every five years; it serves a much bigger purpose toward continuous quality improvement efforts to better serve the people of your jurisdiction. The process really does work.

### Promising Practice: Transformation Office and Project Management Office.

During the process toward seeking reaccreditation, the OSDH developed templates for state health assessments, county and state health improvement plans, and lessons learned documents that were shared with multiple states to facilitate their own accreditation efforts. The OSDH also created a dedicated Transformation Office and Project Management Office to align strategic initiatives with department goals and needs and to better communicate the impact of the work among staff and stakeholders. Staff of the offices convene teams to establish charters, monitor upcoming dates and milestones, send reminders to initiative owners, and host regular bi-weekly meetings to gather updates, review progress, celebrate big wins, and identify roadblocks. This practice:

- Improves the OSDH's capacity to provide high quality programs and services;
- Increases the use of evidence-based practices;
- Uses QI processes to inform decision making;
- Builds morale and develops workforce capacity and,
- Improves customer service and staff satisfaction.



OSDH new mobile unit to serve rural communities across Oklahoma



OSDH Procurement team awarded the 2022 Golden Transformer Award