

QUALITY IMPROVEMENT CORNER – July-August 2019

Welcome to the fourth installment of Quality Improvement Corner. Here, PHAB Accreditation Specialist April Harris, MPH, CHES, discusses ways that Section II of the required Annual Report can provide tailored feedback for strengthening an accredited health department's efforts related to performance management and quality improvement.

As a health department continues its ongoing effort to strengthen a culture of improvement, it can be a challenge to determine if the strategies employed have been successful. One way that an accredited health department can receive tailored feedback regarding their improvement efforts is through the required Annual Report. Section II of the Annual Report describes current quality improvement (QI) and performance management (PM) efforts, as well as descriptions of plans to continue their work over the next year.

PHAB's Evaluation and Quality Improvement (EQI) Committee, comprised of public health practitioners from across the country with experience in PM/QI, actively participates in the review of a health department's Section II. This feedback provides specific guidance on opportunities for improvement and emphasizes a health department's successful PM/QI practices. Examples of feedback could include strategies for strengthening future QI projects, ideas for engaging additional staff and/or guidance for developing meaningful performance improvement metrics. The EQI Committee is also providing guidance as PHQIX is transitioned to PHAB; when this site is re-launched it will offer additional examples and resources to support PM/QI.

Accredited health departments have described various ways that their Annual Report feedback has been helpful. Sara Cody, the health department director of the County of Santa Clara Public Health Department (CA), accredited in 2016, stated, "PHAB's feedback suggested that our health department has an opportunity to continue to make connections between the strategic plan and QI efforts, and that there is an opportunity to continue to expand this work across the entire organization. The department's draft strategic plan for the next cycle includes a priority area that incorporates quality improvement, which will ensure that QI is strongly connected to the strategic plan and that strategies are aimed at the entire organization." Marci Flechler, the Accreditation Coordinator in Bullitt County Health Department (KY), accredited in 2016, reflected on their review by saying, "It is much appreciated to receive feedback that shares both areas for growth and also those areas we are doing well. Having constructive feedback and suggestions, as we move forward toward reaccreditation, gives us direction and guidance that can increase efficiency on our end. We really like that the Annual Reports are tailored to specific years, post-accreditation."

To help health departments capture their improvement efforts, PHAB provides guidance documents to accompany each Annual Report. Here are a few tips:

- Be as descriptive as possible – this allows for the EQI Committee members to appropriately provide suggestions and feedback that can benefit your health department.
- Plan ahead – the templates for Section II of the Annual Report are in the accredited health department portal and can be accessed at any time.
- Involve other staff members by asking for their input to various questions.
- Use the Annual Report as practice of writing narratives, which is a requirement for reaccreditation.

- Look back on previous feedback given by the EQI Committee to determine if opportunities for improvement have been addressed.
- Remember that clinical/one-on-one patient care QI projects/activities should not be included in the Annual Report.
- Avoid using acronyms unless they are clearly spelled out.
- Consider sharing portions of what has been submitted in your health department's Annual Report, for example, the work described in Question 3 specific to Domain 9 – this table would be an excellent visual to show your governing entity, co-workers or community partners to highlight all the work that has been accomplished and planned out!

If you have any questions about completing the Annual Report, please reach out to April Harris, aharris@phaboard.org.