

GOVERNMENT HEALTH IT

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Public health accreditation catching on

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Five public health agencies have garnered the Public Health Accreditation Board's stamp of approval.

Central Michigan District Health Department, Chicago Department of Public Health, El Paso County Public Health, in Colorado, Kansas City Missouri Health Department and Tulsa Health Department were given the independent nonprofit's accreditation in August, joining 14 others.

The seven step accreditation process includes a range of measures on how the public health agencies address health education, chronic disease prevention and control, communicable disease, injury prevention, maternal health, public health emergency preparedness, access to clinical services, public health laboratory services, environmental public health, and management, administration and governance.

The Public Health Accreditation Board's program is jointly sponsored by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Aiming to set standards for the country's 3,000-plus governmental public health agencies, it launched in 2011 after several years of work, and now a few hundred health departments are considering seeking national accreditation through the program, the organization said.

"We are extremely appreciative of the dedication and commitment these five health departments have made to their communities and states, demonstrating both accountability and transparency in their operations," Leslie M. Beitsch, MD, the PHAB board vice chair, said in a media release.

"Overall, the willingness to have others assess your health department's ability to meet national public health standards, while protecting and promoting the health of the population you serve, is an inspiration to all of us working in public health," said Beitsch, who also directs the Center for Medicine and Public Health at the Florida State University College of Medicine.

Covering a region of 2.7 million, the Chicago Department of Public Health will be the largest public agency with the PHAB's accreditation. Since 2011, the department has been following a "Healthy Chicago" plan focused on 12 priority areas: tobacco reduction, obesity prevention, adolescent health, cancer disparities, cardiovascular disease, HIV prevention healthcare access,

maternal care, communicable disease control, healthy home environments, violence prevention and public health infrastructure.



The agency has embraced the Chicago government's online city portal, offering public access to a variety of datasets and health statistics — a service measured in the PHAB accreditation process.

The Tulsa Health Department is another city public health agency, covering about 600,000 residents, that offers health data, along with economic and environmental quality data, for public use through an online dashboard.

The Department has tried to incorporate more rigorous data use in its community needs assessments, and its Know Your Numbers program also offers adults 18 and older periodic free screening for blood pressure, full lipid panel, anemia, glucose A1c, and body mass index, and registered nurses and dietitians are available for consultations.