

01-02

STATEMENT of POLICY

Performance Standards and Performance Measurement

Policy

The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) supports performance standards for local public health systems as a means for advancing the overall quality and accountability of local public health practice. NACCHO supports the National Public Health Performance Standards Program (NPHPSP) local instrument as a tool for measuring system capacity and informing quality improvement at the system level. Further, NACCHO supports the use of Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP) as a strategic planning process that utilizes the data from the NPHPSP local instrument for performance improvement.

Justification

A performance standard is a generally accepted, objective form of measurement that serves as a rule or guideline against which an organization's (or system's) level of performance can be compared.¹ Performance standards promote and inform continuous quality improvement efforts.²

Improving public health requires the use of performance standards by local public health systems (LPHSs). A LPHS is defined as "the network of organizations and professionals that participate in producing public health services for a defined population or community."³ From a governance perspective, local health departments (LHDs) serve as the "backbone" of LPHSs⁴ and work collaboratively with system partners to assure the conditions in which people can be healthy. Public health challenges are population based, require a systems approach, and are best solved through the LPHS. A high-functioning LHD operating in a weak system will have limited success just as a weak LHD in a well-functioning system will not have the optimal impact on population health outcomes.

The goal of the NPHPSP is to improve the quality of public health practice and the performance of public health systems. The core functions of public health, assessment, policy development, and assurance provide an opportunity for systems development. Comprehensive efforts to improve LHD agency performance will be limited without consideration of the LPHS. Similarly, LPHS performance improvement requires an assessment and consideration of the LHD. The NPHPSP local assessment process provides an indispensable opportunity for LHDs and their LPHS partners to learn about each other's unique roles and responsibilities as members of the LPHS; assess their collective capacity against optimal standards; and initiate quality improvement efforts based on the results of the assessment. The NPHPSP assessment process is an essential step towards advancing the quality and accountability of local public health practice and, ultimately, improving the health of communities.

Record of Action

Approved by NACCHO Board of Directors



March 1, 2001

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References

1. Turning Point National Program Office. (1999). *Guidebook for Performance Measures*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington.
2. “Continuous quality improvement is an ongoing effort to improve the efficiency, effectiveness, quality, or performance of services, processes, capacities, outcomes. These efforts can seek “incremental” improvement over time or “breakthrough” all at once.” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Public Health Performance Standards Program. (2007). Acronyms, Glossary, and Reference Terms.
3. Novick L. F. and Mays G. P., Eds. (2001). *Public Health Administration: Principles for population-based management*. Gaithersburg, MD: Aspen Publishers, Inc.
4. Institute of Medicine of the National Academies Committee on Assuring the Health of the Public in the 21st Century, Board on Health Promotion and Disease Prevention. (2003). *The Future of the Public’s Health in the 21st Century*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.