

New Bedford Health Department prepares for Public Health Accreditation

The New Bedford Health Department is preparing for Public Health Accreditation. Over the next several months, the Department's accreditation readiness team will connect with select community partners to coordinate a series of key interviews, designed to engage and gather input from the community regarding the leading health issues, service gaps, barriers to care, and at-risk population segments, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of the region's health system. Accreditation is managed by the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB), a non-profit entity which implements and oversees national accreditation of public health departments.

A partnership with the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth will facilitate the development of a Community Health Needs Assessment, a Community Health Improvement Plan, and a strategic plan for the Health Department. These three documents are an essential part of the department's planning process, and are required for the Public Health Accreditation Board application readiness process. The documents will be prepared by the accreditation readiness team composed of Health Department staff, UMass Dartmouth staff and students, and led by Damon Chaplin, director of the New Bedford Health Department; Nancy Street, associate professor of nursing at UMass Dartmouth; and Michael Goodman, executive director of the Public Policy Center at the university.

About the New Bedford Health Department

The Health Department's mission is to prevent disease and to promote and protect the health and wellbeing of New Bedford's residents and visitors. The Health Department is responsible

for leading a broad public health mandate that includes environmental health (e.g., housing sanitation, childhood lead poisoning prevention, food safety, trash/nuisance, sewer/septic, swimming pools, and environmental remediation/clean-up), public health nursing, substance abuse and violence prevention, municipal marine lab testing, and health and wellness promotion.

About Public Health Accreditation through the Public Health Accreditation Board

What is Public Health Accreditation?

- The measurement of health department performance against a set of nationally recognized, practice-focused and evidenced-based standards.
- The issuance of recognition of achievement of accreditation within a specified time frame by a nationally recognized entity.
- The continual development, revision, and distribution of public health standards.

The mission of the voluntary national accreditation program is to improve and protect the health of the public by advancing and ultimately transforming the quality and performance of the nation's state, Tribal, local, and territorial public health departments. PHAB recently added Vital Records/Health Statistics accreditation to its services, and in 2019 will also add Army Preventive Medicine Departments.

PHAB's initial accreditation assesses a health department's capacity to carry out the ten Essential Public Health Services; manage an effective health department; and, maintain strong and effective communications with the governing entity. Reaccreditation is necessary for a health department to continue to be designated as accredited. Reaccreditation focuses on assessment of an accredited health departments

continued improvement and advancement thereby becoming increasingly effective at improving the health of the population they serve. PHAB is a 501(c)(3) organization. For more information, visit www.phaboard.org.