

Accreditation Considerations for Shared Services and Mergers

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General Guidance

Organizational configurations of local health departments may be altered during or after the accreditation process due to changing state or local financial and/or political landscapes. PHAB remains agnostic about the organizational structure of the health department. Those decisions are made locally.

PHAB accredits local health departments as the official governmental public health authority for a given jurisdiction. PHAB is agnostic about the legal description of that entity (i.e. non-profit, component of local government, stand-alone agency, etc.).

PHAB is providing this tip sheet for local health departments who are considering or planning major organizational changes. Changes in the organization during or after accreditation may or may not impact the accreditation status of the health department(s). This tip sheet provides clarification of PHAB policies and procedures related to organizational changes in an effort to inform health departments early in their planning process.

Since most situations will be unique for a particular health department, PHAB encourages health departments to contact PHAB to arrange consultation about the potential effect of organizational changes on accreditation status or accreditation planning. The PHAB primary staff contact for this consultation is Robin Wilcox, Chief Program Officer (rwilcox@phaboard.org or 703-778-4549, ext. 106).



Shared Services

PHAB is often asked about how many services can be provided by another health department, organization, or agency and a health department still be accredited. PHAB does not have a formula for the percentage of services that can be provided in this way. PHAB is not prescriptive about how the health department meets the standards and measures. The focus of the standards, measures, and required documentation is that the health department ensures that the services and activities are provided to the population, irrespective of "how" those services and activities are provided or through what organizational structure or arrangement. Many health departments have formal agreements, contracts, or partnerships with other health departments, organizations, or agencies to provide services.

If two or more autonomous local health departments work together to ensure that services are provided to their jurisdictions, those health departments may consider pursuing accreditation through a multi-jurisdictional accreditation application. For more information about that approach, please see www.phaboard.org/wp-content/uploads/MJD-Procedures-080614-FINAL-for-HDs.pdf.

Health departments that share services may still choose to apply as a single local health department, using documentation from partners to demonstrate conformity.

Mergers

As political or funding landscapes are changing, discussions about organizational structures and mergers are occurring. Mergers may impact accreditation status differently in different situations:

- If two accredited health departments merge, then a simple reporting of that merger to PHAB will suffice.
- If two health departments that are not accredited are considering merging, then an early conversation with PHAB should be considered so that the merger plans can include accreditation considerations. It is recommended that if such a merger is planned, the health departments complete the merger before applying for accreditation.
- If an accredited health department is planning a merger with a larger health department that is not accredited, then both health departments should contact PHAB as soon as possible. While each situation is different, in many cases this type of merger will require some level of additional accreditation review to ensure that the standards and measures are met for the entire population.
- If an accredited health department is planning a merger with a smaller health department that is not accredited, then both health departments should consider the impact of the merger on the health department's continued conformity with the standards and measures. In some cases, it may be that no additional accreditation review is required.