

FACT SHEET

Standards for Public Health in Washington State

Why were the standards developed?

The Public Health Standards for Washington were developed to measure the performance of the work we do in public health. They were developed by a partnership of state and local public health workers, the State Board of Health and the University of Washington. The standards identify a higher level of performance than what exists and public health agencies in this state will be expected to work toward meeting the standards in the future.

2010-2011 Public Health Standards for Washington State

With permission from the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB), the *2010-2011 Standards for Public Health in Washington* are based on the PHAB Standards (Beta Test version) as well as the recommendations from the 2008 Washington State site reviews. For this round of reviews, a Basic Set of public health performance standards was developed to reduce the burden on smaller local health agencies considering the current fiscal environment and to ensure as much participation in the review process as possible.

Agencies had a choice about the scope of the 2010-2011 review. Those who wanted to prepare for accreditation in the future could use this cycle to prepare by agreeing to be reviewed on all standards and measures. Local health agencies had three options for their review:

1. The full set of PHAB/National Standards as well as several Washington only measures
2. The Washington set of standards and measures (80% overlap with the PHAB Beta set)
3. The Basic set (reduced set by 60% fewer measures than the WA set)

What do the standards measure?

The standards measure the major areas of public health. Within each major area, the standards identify measures that meet the goal of “what every citizen has a right to expect” from their public health system.

How will the Standards for Public Health be used and how will they help individual agencies?

The standards are a management tool to periodically assess the overall performance of the public health system. They can be used by anyone in the governmental public health system and they articulate the role of each partner within the system. The standards help identify ways to strengthen the system.

Individual Site reports are distributed to each agency. At the end of the review cycle a more comprehensive report is distributed. The individual site reports show how public health organizations performed in 2010-2011. They will help public health organizations in our state identify achievements and analyze why some organizations do not have the resources needed to meet the public health standards. Some standards can be met by changing priorities, others may require more resources. This analysis will help focus our efforts on areas that need improvement.

How does the process work?

In 2010-2011 the public health system was site visited to determine how well state and local public health systems performed to meet the standards. This measurement was conducted in June 2010 for the Department of Health and from March through May 2011 for local health agencies. Final system results will be available in July 2011. Private consultants and a team of state reviewers are conducting the performance measurement at 34 of the 35 local health agencies in Washington. The measurement identifies areas of exemplary practices and areas where services or programs did not meet standards. The results identify achievements of the entire public health system and areas that may need improvement.

Before the site visit, each agency was asked to complete a self-assessment/guidance tool that lists the standards and their measures and to organize documentation supporting each measure. During the site visit the contractors and reviewers looked at documentation for each standard to rate whether the standard was being met. Each agency reviewed will receive a report of the results. The consultants and reviewers also collected 'best practice' documents that will be posted to the Public Health Improvement Partnership website in July-August 2011.

Your opportunity to comment

At the end of each local health jurisdiction site review the Northwest Center for Public Health Practice will contact each agency to participate in a survey about the standards review process. Your feedback is important for future efforts to improve the public health system in Washington State. Results from this survey will be available midsummer 2011.