



HARFORD COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

120 S. Hays Street

P.O. Box 797

Bel Air, Maryland 21014-0797

Susan C. Kelly, EHS
Health Officer

Russell W. Moy, MD, MPH
Deputy Health Officer

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Contacts: Bill Wiseman, Public Information Officer, 410-612-1781

HARFORD COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT RECEIVES PRESTIGIOUS PUBLIC HEALTH ACCREDITATION

Bel Air, MD – March 9, 2015 — The Harford County Health Department received formal notification on March 4th that it has achieved the coveted national accreditation status from the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB). The decision brings the number of governmental public health departments now accredited by PHAB to 67 among more than 3,000 eligible state, local and territorial public health agencies throughout the country.

Serving the current county population of nearly 250,000, the Harford County Health Department (HCHD) becomes one of only four health jurisdictions in Maryland to achieve national accreditation status through PHAB. Harford joins Frederick and Worcester counties that learned of their accreditation in December, along with Allegany County that also was included among the most recent list of those receiving accreditation.

Says Harford County Health Officer, Susan Kelly, "Our Health Department is honored to be joining the elite cohort of nationally accredited public health departments. We are proud to be recognized for our commitment to quality and performance while delivering critical public health services to our community. Likewise, this experience has been tremendously constructive and informational whereby improving the ways we protect and promote the health of the people we serve is the very essence of our existence and this achievement."

Public health departments play a key role in the lives and well-being of people and communities and provide a range of services aimed at promoting healthy behaviors, preventing diseases and injuries, ensuring safe food, water and cleaner air, and preparing for and responding to public health emergencies. To receive accreditation, a health department must undergo a rigorous, multi-faceted, peer reviewed assessment process in order to ensure it meets or exceeds specific standards and measures.

In its application submission, documenting conformance with 97 performance measures across twelve domains of public health practice, the HCHD drew upon its experience and active engagement in a wide array of local health initiatives. Included among these were their Community Health Assessment Process, Community Health Improvement Plan, the Department's Strategic Planning Process and Performance Management System Plan and its Local Health Improvement Coalition activities, all of which were closely linked to partnerships with colleagues throughout Harford County.

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After almost three years since the department first filed its intention to apply for accreditation and initiated its document preparation, PHAB conducted its formal site evaluation on January 15th and 16th. During this time, health department management and staff met with PHAB representatives to review critical aspects of documentation, operations and performance, while credentialing specialists also convened with key stakeholders in the community.

Deputy Health Officer, Russell Moy, M.D., HCHD's Accreditation Coordinator, reflected upon the efforts of all Harford County Health Department employees. "This recognition was earned by every staff member of Harford County Health Department. Our accreditation certainly is a reflection on the quality and contributions of all our personnel, as well as their unrelenting dedication to their work and to the importance of public health."

PHAB is the non-profit organization that administers the national public health accreditation program, which aims to improve and protect the health of the public by advancing the quality and performance of health departments, nationwide. Jointly funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Board was created to serve as the national public health accrediting body. The development of national public health department accreditation has involved, and is supported by, public health leaders and practitioners from the national, tribal, state, local, and territorial levels.

The national accreditation program was created collaboratively over a 10-year period by hundreds of public health practitioners working at the national, Tribal, state, and local levels. Since the program's launch in September 2011, hundreds of public health departments have applied to PHAB for accreditation, and hundreds of public health practitioners from across the nation have been trained to serve as volunteer peer site visitors for the program.

"Achieving accreditation indicates that the Harford County Health Department is dedicated to improving and protecting the health of the community by striving to continuously improve the quality of the services it delivers," said Leslie M. Beitsch, MD, JD, chair of PHAB's Board of Directors and chair of the Department of Behavioral Sciences and Social Medicine at Florida State University College of Medicine. "Accreditation also promotes consistency in meeting standards. With an ever-increasing number of health departments now applying for and becoming accredited, you will be able to expect to receive the same quality of public health services wherever you go in the United States."

To learn more about PHAB visit www.phaboard.org or the Health Department's website at www.harfordcountyhealth.com.

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