Public Health Accreditation Board Launches New Accreditation Program for Vital Records and Health Statistics Units in State Public Health Departments

Accreditation Will Enhance and Improve Vital Records and Health Statistics Services and Programs in Communities Across the Country

ALEXANDRIA, Va. (PRWEB) February 15, 2019 -- The Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) today announced the launch of its newest accreditation program, which will bring the benefits of national accreditation to the vital records and health statistics (VRHS) units of state and territorial health departments. The new Vital Records and Health Statistics Accreditation Program adds to the already robust portfolio of public health department accreditations administered by PHAB, the nonprofit national accrediting organization for state, Tribal, local, and territorial public health departments.

The new, voluntary accreditation certification program is available to eligible applicants in the 57 jurisdictional areas identified by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), to fulfill its legislatively mandated mission to produce national vital statistics. This includes jurisdictions where statewide vital records are collected from the 50 states, the District of Columbia, New York City, American Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and Virgin Islands.

In the United States, the collection of vital records – including information on births, deaths, and other life events – is the legal responsibility of the states and territories, not the federal government. Vital records collected and maintained by the states and territories serve critical public health functions and are essential in tracking life expectancy and creating effective public health programs in communities. In addition to identifying information collected on vital records, health information is collected and used for calculating basic statistics at both the jurisdiction and national level and the data are regularly used for medical and health research.

“Health departments have access to a wealth of data, and accreditation will provide a means for an eligible VRHS unit of a state public health department to identify performance improvement opportunities, enhance management, develop leadership, and strengthen relationships with stakeholders in their community,” said PHAB President and CEO Kaye Bender, PhD, RN, FAAN. “Engaging in the accreditation process will challenge the VRHS unit to systematically think about its roles and responsibilities and how well it fulfills them.”

The development and implementation of accreditation standards for VRHS units marks the culmination of a multi-year collaboration between PHAB and the National Association for Public Health Statistics and Information Systems (NAPHSIS), the national nonprofit organization representing the state vital records and public health statistics offices in the United States. Since 2013, PHAB and NAPHSIS have partnered to develop a strong, credible accreditation program that pairs the accreditation expertise of PHAB with the content expertise of NAPHSIS. The new program is intended to help promote high standards that will validate and guide business operations and quality improvement efforts in vital records and health statistics offices, as well as promote continuous quality improvement.

NAPHSIS has long supported quality improvement and national accreditation and has endorsed the long-term goal of developing a vital records and health statistics accreditation program. The new program fulfills that goal. While VRHS units have benefited from the Model State Vital Statistics Act as well as NAPHSIS-
developed standards, there has not been an accreditation process for these core public health functions until now.

“NAPHSIS is thrilled to be working with PHAB on the accreditation of vital records and health statistics units,” said NAPHSIS Executive Director Shawna Webster. “The collection and stewardship of vital records data is such a unique and complicated service, and I know this new accreditation process will help enhance public health services at every level of the health department.”

Support for the new Vital Records and Health Statistics Accreditation Program has been provided by a cooperative agreement from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Center for State, Tribal, Local, and Territorial Support, with additional funding from the CDC National Center for Health Statistics.

“We have a long-standing interest in advancing and strengthening the performance of our nation’s public health agencies and the services they provide,” said José T. Montero, MD, MHCDS, Director of CDC’s Center for State, Tribal, Local, and Territorial Support. “Accreditation can play a valuable role in establishing consistent standards and highlighting opportunities for improvement, including vital records programs. We are excited and look forward to seeing how the new VRHS Accreditation Program can help with those efforts and further strengthen our nation’s vital records programs.”

PHAB will begin accepting applications for the new Vital Records and Health Statistics Accreditation Program on April 1, 2019. A state or territorial health department does not have to be PHAB-accredited for the VRHS unit to submit an application. Interested applicants may learn more about the program requirements by visiting the VRHS section of the PHAB website.

For more information, contact Teddi Nicolaus at (703) 778-4549, ext. 118, or email tnicolaus@phaboard.org. Learn more about PHAB and accreditation at www.phaboard.org. Subscribe to PHAB's e-newsletter by clicking here.

About the Public Health Accreditation Board
The Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) was created to serve as the national public health accrediting body and is jointly funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The development of national public health accreditation has involved, and is supported by, public health leaders and practitioners from the national, tribal, state, local, and territorial levels. For more information, contact Teddi Nicolaus at (703) 778-4549 ext. 118, or email tnicolaus@phaboard.org. Learn more about PHAB and accreditation at www.phaboard.org, and by signing up for the PHAB e-newsletter.
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