



**Public Health**  
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# News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Unified Government Public Health Department (UGPHD) Awarded National Accreditation through the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) *Accreditation through PHAB Demonstrates The Department's Commitment to Excellence in Serving the Community*

The Unified Government Public Health Department (UGPHD) today announced it has been awarded national accreditation through the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB). Established in 2007, PHAB is the nonprofit organization that administers the national accreditation program, which is designed to improve and protect the health of the public by advancing and transforming the quality and performance of governmental public health agencies in the U.S. and abroad.

“We are incredibly honored to be recognized by PHAB for achieving national standards for health departments, reflecting our work to ensure essential public health services in our community and build a focus on continuous quality improvement into our organization,” said Juliann Van Liew, MPH, Director of the UGPHD. “This is a positive step at any time for a local health department, but especially right now. I firmly believe that going through this process helped prepare us to respond to the pandemic. Before we applied for accreditation, we made key improvements in our data capacity, communications and planning abilities – all of which have been a tremendous advantage in helping us respond to COVID-19 as we have.”

In order to become accredited, a health department must demonstrate how it provides or ensures the 10 Essential Public Health Services:

1. Assess and monitor population health status, factors that influence health, and community needs and assets
2. Investigate, diagnose, and address health problems and hazards affecting the population
3. Communicate effectively to inform and educate people about health, factors that influence it, and how to improve it
4. Strengthen, support, and mobilize communities and partnerships to improve health
5. Create, champion, and implement policies, plans, and laws that impact health

6. Utilize legal and regulatory actions designed to improve and protect the public's health
7. Assure an effective system that enables equitable access to the individual services and care needed to be healthy
8. Build and support a diverse and skilled public health workforce
9. Improve and innovate public health functions through ongoing evaluation, research, and continuous quality improvement
10. Build and maintain a strong organizational infrastructure for public health

Some of the accomplishments of the UGPHD that helped toward accreditation include:

- Facilitating the Community Health Assessment and supporting the development and implementation of a five-year Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP)
  - The CHIP has four focus areas: jobs & education; access to health care; safe & affordable housing; and violence prevention
  - This goes alongside a larger shift toward focusing local public health work on addressing the “social determinants of health,” defined by the CDC as, “conditions in the places where people live, learn, work, and play that affect a wide range of health and quality-of life-risks and outcomes.”
- Creating unique community partnerships
  - The UGPHD has built partnerships with a variety of organizations in the community to better meet local public health needs. This includes partnerships with organizations not traditionally in the public health field, such as economic development. Many of these partnerships have grown through the CHIP as well as other health coalition work.
  - Additional partnerships have grown in response to the pandemic, including the UGPHD's role as part of the Health Equity Task Force.
- Staff training and development
  - Over the past two years, the UGPHD has worked to build up its workforce development strategies, including more robust staff training to ensure that all staff share a background in the essential public health services.
- Adapting workflow in response to the pandemic
  - The UGPHD quickly adapted staff workflows to encourage staff who are able to work remotely to do so, and to shift and increase staffing and resources to better provide testing and vaccinations
  - Contact tracing, testing services, communications, public health protocols, and more recently, vaccine distribution, have evolved quickly in response to the ever-changing pandemic.

The UGPHD is one of only seven health departments in the state of Kansas that has received accreditation from the PHAB. Out of the state's 104 counties, only five county health departments have received this accreditation (the other counties being Johnson, Douglas, Riley and Sedgwick). The other two accredited departments in the state are the Kansas Department of Health and Environment and the Fort Riley Department of Public Health.

The national accreditation program, which receives support from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, sets standards against which the nation's governmental public health departments can continuously improve the quality of their services and performance. More than 80 percent of the U.S. population now reap the benefits of

being served by a health department that has undergone PHAB's rigorous, multi-faceted, peer-reviewed assessment process to ensure it meets a set of quality standards and measures.

"The value of becoming nationally accredited through PHAB extends far beyond the interior walls of the health department," said PHAB President and CEO Paul Kuehnert, DNP, RN, FAAN. "People living and working in communities served by these health departments can be assured that their health department is strong and has the capacity to protect and promote their health. Just going through the accreditation process itself helps health departments pinpoint the areas that are critical to improving the work they do for their communities."

Often called the "backbone" of the public health system, public health departments are on the front lines of communities' efforts to protect and promote health and prevent disease and injury. Across the nation, public health departments provide services designed to promote healthy behaviors; prevent diseases and injuries; ensure access to safe food, water, clean air, and life-saving immunizations; and prepare for and responding to public health emergencies.

"We congratulate the Unified Government Public Health Department for working to serve its community in the best possible way," said Joe Finkbonner, RPh, MHA, chair of PHAB's Board of Directors. "The accreditation process requires a commitment to quality and performance improvement. By achieving accreditation through PHAB, people living and working in Wyandotte County can rest assured that the UG Public Health Department is strong, has been rigorously examined, and has the capacity to protect and promote the health of everyone in the community."

For more information about the Unified Government Public Health Department visit [wycokck.org/health](http://wycokck.org/health).

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#### **About the Unified Government Public Health Department**

The Unified Government Public Health Department (UGPHD), nationally accredited by the Public Health Accreditation Board, works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Wyandotte County. Learn more about the UGPHD at [wycokck.org/health](http://wycokck.org/health).

#### **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 department accreditation has involved, and is supported by, public health leaders and practitioners from the national, state, local, Tribal, and territorial levels. For more information, contact PHAB Communications Manager Teddi Nicolaus at (703) 778-4549 ext. 118, or email [tnicolaus@phaboard.org](mailto:tnicolaus@phaboard.org). Learn more about PHAB and accreditation at [www.phaboard.org](http://www.phaboard.org), and by [signing up](#) for the PHAB e-newsletter