



Department of Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



GOVERNANCE

Public Health Performance Assessment



National Public Health Performance Standards Program

SAFER • HEALTHIER • PEOPLE™



Table of Contents

Part I: Overview of the National Public Health Performance Standards Program (NPHPSP)

- A. Introduction
- B. Concepts Guiding Performance Standards Development and Use
- C. Assessment Instrument Structure
- D. Data Limitations
- E. Using Results for Quality Improvement
- F. Conclusion

Part II: Self Assessment Instrument Results

Table 1: Summary of Performance Scores by Essential Public Health Service (EPHS)

Figure 1: How Did We Perform in the Ten Areas of Essential Public Health Services (EPHS)? Summary Performance Scores by Descending Order – Bar Chart Arranged in Descending Order

Figure 2: How Did We Perform in the Ten Areas of Essential Public Health Services (EPHS)? Summary Performance Scores by EPHS – Bar Chart Arranged in Order of EPHS

Figure 3: How Well Did We Meet Performance Expectations in the Areas of Essential Public Health Service (EPHS)? Percentage of Performance Scores Meeting Model Standards (Pie chart)

Table 2: Where Do We Excel? Where Do We Need to Take a Closer Look? Summary of Performance Scores by Model Standards

Table 3: Summary of Performance Scores by Essential Public Health Service (EPHS) and indicators



The National Public Health Performance Standards Program

INTRODUCTION

The National Public Health Performance Standards Program (NPHPSP) is a partnership initiative established in 1998 to improve the practice of public health, the performance of public health systems, and the infrastructure supporting public health actions. To accomplish this mission, performance standards for public health systems have been collaboratively developed. These standards represent an optimal level of performance that needs to exist to deliver essential public health services within a public health system.

The NPHPSP is intended to improve the quality of public health practice and the performance of public health systems by:

1. Providing performance standards for public health systems and encouraging their widespread use;
2. Engaging and leveraging national, state, and local partnerships to build a stronger foundation for public health preparedness;
3. Promoting continuous quality improvement of public health systems; and
4. Strengthening the science base for public health practice improvement.

The NPHPSP is led by the Office of Chief of Public Health Practice, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Collaborative partners in establishing and supporting the NPHPSP are the: American Public Health Association (APHA), Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO), National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO), National Association of Local Boards of Health (NALBOH), National Network of Public Health Institutes (NNPHI), and the Public Health Foundation (PHF). In addition, eight state public health agencies (Florida, Hawaii, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Ohio, New York and Texas) and hundreds of local public health agencies within these states worked with their system partners to assist in testing and developing the state and local assessment instruments. The governance instrument was tested by boards in Minnesota, Mississippi, and Massachusetts.

The NPHPSP includes three instruments:

1. **The State Public Health System Performance Assessment Instrument (State Instrument)** focuses on the “state public health system.” This system includes state public health agencies and other partners that contribute to public health services at the state level. The instrument was developed under the leadership of ASTHO and CDC.
2. **The Local Public Health System Performance Assessment Instrument (Local Instrument)** focuses on the “local public health system” or all entities that contribute to the delivery of public health services within a community. This system includes all public, private, and voluntary entities, as well as individuals and informal associations. The local instrument was developed under the leadership of NACCHO and CDC.



3. **The Local Public Health Governance Performance Assessment Instrument (Governance Instrument)** focuses on the governing body ultimately accountable for public health at the local level. Such governing bodies may include boards of health or county commissioners. The governance instrument was developed under the leadership of NALBOH and CDC.

CONCEPTS GUIDING PERFORMANCE STANDARDS DEVELOPMENT AND USE

Four concepts have helped to frame the National Public Health Performance Standards into their current format:

1. The standards are **designed around the ten Essential Public Health Services (EPHS)**. These ten services are the foundation of any public health action and describe the full range of public health responsibilities. The EPHS were first articulated in 1994 in the Public Health in America statement. The use of the EPHS provides a way to describe and examine the breadth of public health practice, system performance, and infrastructure capability needed for both the state and local public health system levels.
2. The standards in the State and Local Instruments **focus on the overall public health system**, rather than a single organization. A public health system includes all public, private, and voluntary entities that contribute to public health activities within a given area. By focusing on the public health system, the contributions of all entities are recognized in assessing the provision of EPHS. The Governance Instrument focuses on the governing entity; however, it pays significant attention to how the governing entity can support the performance of the overall public health system.
3. The standards **describe an optimal level of performance**, rather than provide minimum expectations. This assures that the standards can be used for continuous quality improvement. The standards will stimulate performance and infrastructure improvement in public health systems.
4. The standards are explicitly intended to **support a process of quality improvement**. System partners should use the assessment process and results as a guide for learning about public health activities throughout the system and determining how to improve services. The standards can also be used to advocate for improvements to better serve populations within a public health system.

ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT STRUCTURE

The NPHPSP assessment instruments are constructed using the Essential Public Health Services as a framework. Within the Governance Instrument, each EPHS includes an indicator that describes the critical oversight and authority roles of the governing entity. Each indicator is illustrated by a model standard that describes aspects of a high performing public health governing entity. The model standards articulated in the instrument represent expert public health opinion and best practice



concepts. Each model standard is addressed by assessment questions that serve as measures of performance.

The measures elicit information on how well the model standard is being met. There are four response options associated with each measure. The spectrum of activity associated with each response option is:

Yes	Greater than 75% of the activity described within the question is met by the governing entity.
High Partially	Greater than 50%, but no more than 75% of the activity described within the question is met by the governing entity.
Low Partially	Greater than 25%, but no more than 50% of the activity described within the question is met by the governing entity.
No	No more than 25% of the activity described within the question is met by the governing entity.

DATA LIMITATIONS

Performance scores are based on somewhat unique processes and system participant groups. Assessment methods are not yet fully standardized and these differences in survey administration can introduce measurement error. Additionally, differences in knowledge can create interpretation issues for some questions and this can introduce a degree of random non-sampling error. Results and recommendations associated with these reported data should be used for quality improvement within an overall public health infrastructure and performance improvement process for public health governing bodies.

USING RESULTS FOR QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

The NPHPSP assessment instruments are intended to promote and stimulate quality improvement. As a result of the assessment process, the respondents will be able to identify strengths and weaknesses within the governing entity and its local public health system. This information can pinpoint areas that need improvement. To achieve a higher performing governing entity and public health system, organizational and system improvement plans then must be developed and implemented as described in the User Guide. Coordinated use of the Governance Instrument and its results with use of the Local Instrument and the system-wide results can lead to more successful and comprehensive improvement plans. Suggested steps in developing such improvement plans are listed below:



1. Organize Participation for Performance Improvement
2. Prioritize Areas for Action
3. Explore “Root Causes” of Performance Problems
4. Develop and Implement Improvement Plans
5. Regularly Monitor and Report Progress

Refer to the User Guide section, "Now That We Have Completed the Assessment, What Next?" for details on the above steps.

Resources are available to assist in quality improvement activities. In addition to the NPHPSP User Guide, the following can be found on or are linked to the NPHPSP website at <http://www.cdc.gov/od/ocphp/nphpsp>:

- Performance Improvement Resource Guides (state and local)
- Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP)
- Sample performance improvement plans
- Quality improvement tools and guidebooks
- Other technical assistance documents

CONCLUSION

Governing bodies play an important role in assuring the creation and existence of well equipped and high performing public health systems. Public health performance standards are intended to guide the development of stronger public health governing bodies and systems capable of improving the health of populations. High-performing public health systems will increase the likelihood that all residents have access to a defined optimal level of public health services. Through continuous assessment guided by model performance standards, public health leaders can improve collaboration and integration among the many components of a public health system, more effectively and efficiently use resources, and improve health intervention services.

*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Office of the Director, Office of Chief of Public Health Practice
National Public Health Performance Standards Program
1-800-747-7649 or phpsp@cdc.gov*