

# Health Dept. Earns Accreditation

The Putnam County Department of Health has achieved national accreditation by the Public Health Accreditation Board, effective March 8. The five-year designation demonstrates increased accountability and credibility to the public, funders, elected officials and partner organizations.

The accreditation process works to ultimately transform the quality and performance of the nation's more than 2,500 health departments. The Putnam County Department of Health is one of less than 200 to achieve this honor.

"This achievement is the result of four years of focused work by the health department," said County Executive MaryEllen Odell. "We

should be very proud. We are the first county in the Hudson Valley and one of a select few from among the many counties in New York State."

Dr. Michael Nesheiwat, interim health commissioner, added: "This is an important national designation. Hospitals need to be accredited; now health departments can take up a similar challenge. This accomplishment of our county's health department serves to reassure our residents that we have an efficient and effective public health system."

PHAB President and CEO Dr. Kaye Bender said the accreditation shows a strong commitment to the department's public health mission.

"Residents served by a nationally accredited health department can be reassured that their health department has demonstrated the capacity to protect and promote the health of their community," said Bender.

The health department's journey to accreditation initially began in 2012 with the preliminary pre-accreditation process of strategic planning. Then in August 2013, a formal statement of intent was submitted to the PHAB. The process wrapped up in early January 2016 with a two-day site visit by a team of trained peer examiners, familiar with typical health department procedures, who scrutinized documents and questioned staff members in face-to-face discussions.

From start to finish, partners throughout the county and nearly every staff member of the department were engaged. The accreditation process also provided a way to measure health department performance against a set of national standards, while increasing communication and collaboration with community partners and identifying areas for improvement in the Community Health Improvement Plan. The department examined its own operations, services and mission, and formulated a strategic plan and workforce development plan.

When all was done, more than 1,080 electronic files were prepared and submitted, equaling more than 1.15 gigabytes of data.

The successful conclusion was reached at the PHAB meeting March 8, when committee members voted after reviewing the site visitors' final reports.

Launched in 2011, the Public Health Accreditation Board was created to serve as the national public health accreditation body and is jointly funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

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# TIMES

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