



News Release FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Coconino County Health Department Has Been Selected to Test National Accreditation Program

Test Will Help to Shape the Future of Public Health

Flagstaff, Arizona – The Coconino County Health Department (CCHD) announced today it was selected by the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) to participate in a test of the new national voluntary public health accreditation program. As one of 30 public health agencies selected from more than 145 applicants, CCHD will work through the accreditation process and will provide valuable feedback that will inform the voluntary accreditation program's national launch in 2011. CCHD will receive technical assistance for accreditation and quality improvement, funding to support quality improvement projects and funding and to cover the costs of providing detailed feedback to PHAB.

The Navajo Nation Division of Health in Window Rock, Arizona was also selected to participate in the test of the new national voluntary public health accreditation program. Information about other sites is available at <http://www.phaboard.org/>.

The test will begin in the fall of 2009 and conclude at the end of 2010. The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) will provide technical assistance to the CCHD and other sites.

“We are pleased to be part of this ground breaking program,” said Barbara Worgess, CCHD Director. “We recognize that this is a unique opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of our services and also showcase the high quality programs and services provided by the Coconino County Health Department. We are proud to have a hand in shaping the national accreditation program and advancing the quality of public health.”

While there are standards for hospitals, schools, law enforcement agencies and even daycare centers, there has not previously been a nationally-recognized set of standards for public health departments despite the critical role they play in preserving and promoting the health of communities and residents. The goal of public health accreditation is to improve and protect the health of the public by advancing the quality and performance of all health departments in the country.

“The launch of the test is a critical step that moves us closer to a national voluntary accreditation program that is practical and promotes continuous quality improvement in all health departments,” said PHAB President and Chief Executive Officer Kaye Bender, RN, PhD, FAAN. “The overwhelming number of applications we received from health departments that wanted to be test sites signals that public health departments recognize the need for national standards and understand their value. With accreditation status, public health departments will be able to demonstrate increased accountability and credibility to the public, funders, elected officials and other stakeholders.”

“Local health departments protect people and keep them healthy,” said Robert M. Pestronk, Executive Director, National Association of County and City Health Officials. “Our Association is pleased to partner with PHAB, local health department test sites, and other national organizations to establish a national accreditation program that will help shape the practice of public health in America. A national accreditation program is one important step towards continuously improving local health department public health practice that protects people and creates the conditions in which health is the natural outcome.”

In addition to NACCHO, several other leading national public health organizations have partnered with PHAB to support the test, including the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Association of Local Board of Health (NALBOH), the National Indian Health Board (NIHB), and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF).

In order to ensure that they represent a broad cross-section of the U.S. population, the health departments selected to be part of the test vary in size, structure, population served, governance, geographic region, and degree of preparedness for accreditation. For a complete listing of the 30 test sites, please visit <http://www.phaboard.org>.

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The Coconino County Health Department (CCHD) provides an array of activities designed to promote and protect the health of the people of Coconino County. The CCHD educates the public about public health issues and provides medical care, education, and information to the community, through a variety of programs and services.

CCHD’s Mission:

To prevent epidemics and the spread of disease, protect against environmental hazards, promote and encourage healthy behaviors, assure accessibility of health services.

The Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) is dedicated to raising the standard for public health. With support from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, PHAB is working with leading public health experts from the field to develop a voluntary national accreditation program that will help public health departments assess their current capacity and guide them to become even better providers of quality service, thus promoting a healthier public.

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