

# NEWS RELEASE

May 27, 2016

For immediate release

For more information, contact: Kim Engel, 308-760-2415 or 308-487-3600 Ext. 102.

## Panhandle Public Health District Awarded National Accreditation Through the Public Health Accreditation Board

### *PHAB-Accredited Health Departments Demonstrate the Capacity to Serve their Communities Well*

Panhandle Public Health District (PPHD) announced today that it has achieved national accreditation through the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB). The national accreditation program works to improve and protect the health of the public by advancing and ultimately transforming the quality and performance of the nation's state, local, Tribal, and territorial public health departments. PPHD is one of fewer than 150 health departments in the nation and the second local health department in Nebraska to achieve accreditation since PHAB launched in 2011. However, hundreds of health departments across the country are preparing to seek accreditation through PHAB, the non-profit organization that administers the national public health accreditation program.

Nebraska's statewide public health system just celebrated its 15<sup>th</sup> year. PPHD was established in 2002 and serves the Panhandle counties of Banner, Box Butte, Cheyenne, Dawes, Deuel, Garden, Grant, Kimball, Morrill, Sioux and Sheridan.

"We are pleased and excited to be recognized for achieving national standards that foster effectiveness and promote continuous quality improvement," said Kim Engel, Director of Panhandle Public Health District. "The accreditation process helps to ensure that the programs and services we provide are as responsive as possible to the needs of our community. With accreditation, PPHD is demonstrating increased accountability and credibility to the public, funders, elected officials and partner organizations with which we work."

The national accreditation program, jointly supported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, sets standards against which the nation's nearly 3,000 governmental public health departments can continuously improve the quality of their services and performance. To receive accreditation, a health department must undergo a rigorous, multi-faceted, peer-reviewed assessment process to ensure it meets or exceeds a set of quality standards and measures.

"The PHAB seal of accreditation indicates that Panhandle Public Health District has been rigorously examined and meets or exceeds national standards that promote continuous quality improvement for public health," Engel said. "By continuing to improve our services

and performance, we can be sure we are meeting the public health needs of those we serve as effectively as possible.”

Public health departments play a critical role in protecting and improving the health of people and communities. Panhandle Public Health District promotes policy, system, and environmental supports to develop healthy communities and “make the healthy choice the easy choice.” PPHD oversees the Panhandle Worksite Wellness Council, National Diabetes Prevention Program in the Panhandle, Healthy Families America, Panhandle Region Medical Response System, Tobacco Free in the Panhandle, and many other health and wellness initiatives. The goals of PPHD’s Community Health Improvement Plan are: healthy living; healthy eating, active living, and breastfeeding; mental and emotional well-being; cancer prevention; and injury and violence prevention.

“The Panhandle Public Health District joins the growing ranks of accredited health departments in a strong commitment to their public health mission,” said PHAB President and CEO Kaye Bender, PhD, RN, FAAN. “The peer-review process provides valuable feedback to inform health departments of their strengths and areas for improvement, so that they can better protect and promote the health of the people they serve in their communities. Residents of a community served by a nationally accredited health department can be assured that their health department has demonstrated the capacity to protect and promote the health of that community.”

The national accreditation program was created collaboratively over a 10-year period by hundreds of public health practitioners working at the national, Tribal, state, and local levels. Since the program’s launch in September 2011, hundreds of public health departments have applied to PHAB for accreditation, and hundreds of public health practitioners from across the nation have been trained to serve as volunteer peer site visitors for the program.

“Achieving accreditation indicates that Panhandle Public Health District is dedicated to improving and protecting the health of the community by striving to continuously improve the quality of the services it delivers,” said Ray (Bud) Nicola, MD, MHSA, chair of PHAB’s Board of Directors and affiliate professor at the University of Washington School of Public Health in Seattle. “Accreditation also promotes consistency in meeting standards. With an ever-increasing number of health departments now applying for and becoming accredited, you will be able to expect to receive the same quality of public health services wherever you go in the United States.”

### **About the Panhandle Public Health District**

For more information, visit [www.pphd.org](http://www.pphd.org). Panhandle Public Health District is working together to improve the health, safety and quality of life for all who live, learn, work and play in the Panhandle. Our vision is that we are a healthier and safer Panhandle Community.

**About the Public Health Accreditation Board**

The Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB), established in 2007, 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, and local levels. Learn more about PHAB or sign up for the PHAB e-newsletter by visiting [www.phaboard.org](http://www.phaboard.org).

###