Local Health Department Awarded National Accreditation

Lewis and Clark Public Health (LCPH) was awarded accreditation for the first time this month by the national, nonprofit Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB).

Only about 160 of 2,800 local health departments in the country have achieved this recognition since PHAB launched its program in 2011.

LCPH was only the fifth county health department in Montana to become accredited. The five-year-long effort involved not only public health staff, but also the City-County Board of Health and many community partner organizations.

The national accreditation program is jointly supported by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. It sets standards that guide government public health departments in continuously improving the quality of their services and performance. To be accredited, a health department must undergo a rigorous, multi-faceted, peer-reviewed assessment and demonstrate that it meets or exceeds PHAB standards.

“We’re thrilled to be recognized as a top-notch health department that’s committed to continuous improvement,” said Melanie Reynolds, county health officer and director of LCPH. “We chose to do this voluntarily, and it’s taken us five hard years to get here. But we believe it’s important to demonstrate a high level of accountability and effectiveness to our public, partners, and elected officials.”

LCPH serves all residents of Lewis and Clark County. Its mission is to improve and protect public health through programs and services aimed at promoting healthy behaviors; preventing diseases and injuries; ensuring access to clean air and water and life-saving immunizations; and preparing for and responding to public health emergencies.

Among the areas of improvement the PHAB standards address are:

- Assessing community health and prioritizing health issues;
- Investigating health problems and environmental health hazards;
- Educating and informing the public to support wellness;
- Collaborating with the community to address health problems;
- Enforcing public health laws; and
- Helping to assure access to health care.
PHAB President and CEO Kaye Bender said accreditation shows a “strong commitment to the public health mission.”

“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,” Bender added.

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.

To learn more about Lewis and Clark Public Health, visit its website at www.LewisAndClarkHealth.org or find it on Facebook at www.facebook.com/LewisandClarkHealth/

To learn more about public health accreditation, visit www.phaboard.org