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Health Performance Tools Field Tested In Three States

Health officials in three states are testing components of a new program that gauges how well their public health systems are working in their communities.

Through the National Public Health Performance Standards Program, officials are using a series of instruments to measure how well they provide essential public health services such as community health monitoring, health regulation enforcement, investigations of health hazards and community education.

The instruments were developed by the National Association of County and City Health Officials, Association of State and Territorial Health Officials, National Association of Local Boards of Health and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Early versions of the instruments were pilot tested in Texas, Florida, Missouri and Ohio, and revised versions are now being field tested in Hawaii, Minnesota and Mississippi. During the field tests, which will be completed this month, staffs from CDC and members of NACCHO, ASTHO and NALBOH are guiding health officials in the states on the use of the instruments, which will eventually be available for use nationwide.

The National Public Health Performance Standards Program, led by a partnership of health organizations, was created to develop performance standards, collect and analyze performance data and improve system-wide performance of essential public health services. APHA is a member of the program partnership, which includes NACCHO, ASTHO, NALBOH, CDC and the Public Health Foundation.

An advantage of the program is that it measures performance at the state, local and governance levels, and assesses the entire public health system of a community. In the past, assessments of public

health services have tended to focus on one entity, such as a health department, noted Annette Ferebee, MPH, APHA's liaison to the program.

The new instruments, however, take into account all of the players that affect the health status of a community.

"With these instruments, local and state health workers will be able to see where they are doing well and where they may need to commit more of their resources," Ferebee said.

For more information on the program, call CDC at (800) 747-7649 or visit www.phppo.cdc.gov/dphs/nphpsp.

Information is also available through the APHA Web site at www.apha.org/ppp/shipmain.htm.

- Michele Late