



# Panhandle Health District

*Healthy People in Healthy Communities*

**Public Health**  
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**Panhandle Health District**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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

**Hayden, ID** – Panhandle Health District (PHD) 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 and districts. PHD is one of fewer than 300 health departments that have thus far achieved accreditation through PHAB since the organization 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.

“We are pleased and excited to be recognized for achieving national standards that foster effectiveness and promote continuous quality improvement,” said Lora Whalen, Director, of the Panhandle 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, PHD 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.

“Whenever you see our seal of accreditation, you will know that Panhandle Health District has been rigorously examined and meets or exceeds national standards that promote continuous quality improvement for public health,” Whalen 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. In cities, towns, and states across the nation, health departments provide a range of services aimed at promoting healthy behaviors; preventing diseases and injuries; ensuring access to safe food, water, clean air, and life-saving immunizations; and preparing for and responding to public health emergencies.

PHD provides over 40 different public health services and public health programs to families, individuals and organizations in Kootenai, Boundary, Bonner, Benewah and Shoshone counties. The PHD team is made up of nurse practitioners, registered nurses, nutritionists, environmental health specialists, health educators and many other dedicated professionals. PHD offers services regardless if someone is insured or not; many of the services are based on sliding fee scales ensuring the community is safe and healthy. Each county is unique in their health needs and PHD works to address those needs by conducting community health assessments and improvement plans that involve community partners.

“PHD 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 PHD is dedicated to improving and protecting the health of the community by striving to continuously improve the quality of the services it delivers,” said Joe Finkbonner, MHA, Executive Director of the Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board in Portland, Oregon. “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.”

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**Panhandle Health District** provides over 40 different public health programs to families, individuals and organizations in northern Idaho. From food and drinking water safety to health

education and disease control, public health services are critical to ensure our community is a safe and healthy place to live, work and play.

The PHD team is made up of nurses, nutritionists, environmental health specialists, health educators and many other dedicated professionals with a common goal to deliver vital public health services.

Panhandle Health District is one of seven health districts in the state of Idaho.

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