



*Rappahannock Area
Health District*

News Release

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**RAPPAHANNOCK AREA HEALTH DISTRICT
AWARDED NATIONAL ACCREDITATION**

(Fredericksburg, Va.)— The Rappahannock Area Health District (RAHD) announced today it has been awarded national accreditation through the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB). Established in 2007, PHAB is the non-profit organization that administers the national accreditation program, which aims to advance and transform public health practice by championing performance improvement, strong infrastructure, and innovation. Accreditation through PHAB demonstrates RAHD’s commitment to excellence in serving the community and meeting foundational needs.

“In receiving PHAB accreditation, we have validated the trust and reliance our stakeholders have shown us,” said Dr. Olugbenga Obasanjo, RAHD district director. “At a time when pandemic fatigue was eroding Public Health credibility, our community, partners, elected officials, and state leaders supported, promoted and actively participated in our decision to pursue PHAB accreditation. This recognition reassures us all that the services we provide are responsive to the needs of our community.”

The national accreditation program, which receives support from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, sets standards against which the nation’s governmental public health departments can continuously improve the quality of their services and performance. Standards emphasize Foundational Capabilities and are aligned with the 10 Essential Public Health Services. Approximately 11% of local health departments nationwide are accredited, and RAHD is only the fifth of the 35 local health districts in Virginia to achieve this distinction.

"The value of becoming nationally accredited through PHAB extends far beyond the walls of the health department," said PHAB President and CEO Paul Kuehnert, DNP, RN, FAAN. "People living and working in communities served by these health departments can be assured that their health department is strong and has the capacity to protect and promote their health. Going through the accreditation process itself helps health departments pinpoint the areas that are critical to improving the work they do for their communities."

Though RAHD is perhaps most widely known for providing clinical services and working on the COVID-19 response, additional RAHD programs include:

- Inspecting and permitting food establishments, including but not limited to restaurants, food trucks, temporary food vendors, and school cafeterias.
- Permitting on-site septic systems in the area
- Inspecting public swimming pools, hotels, and campgrounds
- Investigating reports of exposure to potentially rabid animals
- Administering the Women’s Infants and Children (WIC) program, providing nutrition education, breastfeeding promotion and support, supplemental nutritious foods, counseling at WIC clinics, and screening and referrals to other health and social services
- Investigating outbreaks of communicable disease, including in nursing homes and school settings
- Identifying sources of foodborne illnesses
- Connecting community members to resources like food, housing, and primary care
- Providing no cost naloxone to community members and coordinating local opioid overdose prevention efforts
- Leading and participating in various coalitions with community-based organizations
- Preparing for and responding to public health emergencies
- Providing birth, death, marriage, and death certificates
- Conducting the Community Health Assessment and Community Health Improvement Plan in partnership with Mary Washington Healthcare, which most recently identified mental health, affordable housing, and access to healthcare as priority issues for our area.

“Public health is about creating the conditions in which everyone can be healthy,” continued Dr. Obasanjo. “Our staff works to create these community conditions every day, and our newly minted accreditation status shows we are ready to serve as the community’s strategic partner to continue to improve health in our area.”

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About the Rappahannock Area Health District

The Rappahannock Area Health District works to protect, promote, and improve the health of all people in Caroline, King George, Spotsylvania, and Stafford Counties and the City of Fredericksburg. Learn more about the Rappahannock Area Health District at www.vdh.virginia.gov/rappahannock/.

About the Public Health Accreditation Board

The Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) 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. Vital Records/Health Statistics accreditation is funded, in part, by the National Center for Health Statistics. The development of national public health department accreditation has involved, and is supported by, public health leaders and practitioners from the national, state, local, Tribal, and territorial levels. For more information, contact PHAB Communications Specialist Janalle Goosby at jgoosby@phaboard.org . Learn more about PHAB and accreditation at www.phaboard.org.