

St. Mary's County Health Department Achieves National Accreditation

Posted by [TBN\(Staff\)](#) On 05/25/2021

LEONARDTOWN, Md. - The St. Mary's County Health Department (SMCHD) has achieved national accreditation through the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB). PHAB is the nonprofit organization that administers the national accreditation program for health departments. Accreditation aims to advance and transform public health practice by championing performance improvement, evidence-based action, and innovation.

"We are absolutely thrilled to get this news from the Public Health Accreditation Board. Surpassing national standards of excellence for public health practice reflects many years of intense work by our SMCHD team to improve our service to this community, and is also a testament to the strong community partners that work with us on our public health mission," said Dr. Meena Brewster, St. Mary's County Health Officer. "We have seen during the COVID-19 pandemic how our collective efforts over the past several years have enabled a more comprehensive and skilled pandemic response. I am grateful for the incredible strength and determination of our health department team members in their service to our community. Thank you also to our awesome community partners and Board of Health for their ongoing support in improving public health for St. Mary's County."

The national accreditation program sets standards which the nation's more than 3,000 governmental public health departments can work towards by continuously improving the quality of their services. To receive accreditation, a health department must undergo a rigorous, multi-faceted, peer-reviewed assessment to ensure it meets or exceeds a set of quality standards and measures. During this process, SMCHD documented conformance with all 100 performance measures across twelve domains of public health practice.

"The accreditation process was an opportunity for the St. Mary's County Health Department to examine our entire organization from the inside out. Nearly all our staff participated in one way or another, and we learned many ways to improve the practice of public health in our county," said Denise Sulerzyski, SMCHD Accreditation & Quality Coordinator. "This achievement is a reflection of our dedicated staff who work to protect the health and improve the lives of all St. Mary's County residents."

Often called the "backbone" of the public health system, local health departments lead and are on the front lines of their communities' efforts to protect and promote health and prevent injury. Across the nation, local health departments work to promote healthy behaviors; increase access to health care; prevent diseases and injuries; support access to safe food, water, clean air, and life-saving immunizations; and prepare for and respond to public health emergencies

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