

**Preliminary Findings
National Public Health Performance Standards Program
Minnesota Department of Health
Pilot Test of the State Assessment Tool
May 31 and June 1, 2000**

**Prepared by:
Minnesota Department of Health
Community Health Services Division**

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Introduction

Minnesota is one of the several states that has been selected to participate in the pilot test of the National Public Health Performance Standards Program (NPHPSP). The NPHPSP is a joint effort by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and several national public health organizations. The goal of the project is to improve the public health system nationwide. The project hopes to do that by developing tools for measuring the ability of state and local public health agencies, with their communities, to perform the essential services of public health. The project contains a local tool, a state tool and a newly developed governance tool.

On May 31 and June 1, 2000 Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) staff, representation all divisions and the executive office, participated in a pilot test of the state assessment tool. Information gathered from the tool and comments from those participating have been compiled into a very preliminary summary. The CDC is also reviewing the data collected from the pilot which it will share with MDH. This information, when available, will be incorporated into this report.

The purpose of the pilot test is to examine the usefulness, validity and reliability of the assessment tools. The responses to the questions depend on both the understanding and interpretation of the assessment questions and the perspectives of those individuals participating. MDH is interested in comments from local public health representatives and others about the state responses. If you have any comments about the information in this report, please send them to linda.stewart@health.state.mn.us.

* Note: The tool is intended to assess the capacity of the state public health system (SPHS). This is defined as the governmental system public other organizations that contribute to the public's health.

General Observations About...

MDH Performance Strengths and Areas for Improvement:

- MDH and the state public health system (SPHS) are generally strong in the planning and implementation indicators and the professional and technical expertise indicators across most essential services (ES).
- MDH and the SPHS are generally weaker in the “evaluation and quality improvement” indicators and the “resources” indicators across most ES. Rankings in the “technical assistance and support” indicators varied.
- MDH and the SPHS are weak in many indicators of assuring a competent workforce (ES 8). In particular, we have not done enough futuristic planning for an exodus of baby boomers from the state, especially in greater Minnesota.
- MDH and the SPHS are weak in most indicators of evaluating the effectiveness, accessibility and quality of personal and population-based health services (ES 9). The reviewers commented that these questions did not really address personal health services, however.
- The ability to reach and serve populations of color or other diverse populations varies widely by program throughout MDH (several ES).
- The capacity to address health threats and diseases varies by disease and is an area that needs more discussion (ES 2).
- MDH and the SPHS does a good job of mobilizing partnerships at a state level, but not as well at helping local agencies or others mobilize their partnerships (ES 3,4, and 5).
- MDH and the SPHS provides training and informational materials, but have varied ability to provide consultation (ES 3).
- MDH and the SPHS lacks adequate resources to perform health planning functions (ES 9).
- MDH and the SPHS lacks a statewide public health research agenda and clearly defined roles among organizations that have research responsibilities (ES 10).
- Cross-agency collaboration is strong in environmental health (ES 6).

General Observations About...

State Performance Tool and Process for Completing the Tool:

- Some terms need further definition (e.g., health education, health promotion, health communication, comprehensive, support).
- The tool is qualitative, not quantitative, and should serve as the basis for further discussion in the agency and the system.
- It was difficult to answer question for the SPHS versus just MDH.
- The tool needs to distinguish between short-term and long-term care (ES 9).
- The recording form should have more space for notes.
- A computer-based input and immediate feedback process would make data collection easier and more attractive to participants.
- There needs to be a better way to distinguish between “partially” and “substantially” on Likert scales.
- Overall, the participants felt the exercise was valuable and should lead to more discussion.
- Small groups of max-mix tables was a very “doable” way to complete this tool.
- While the tool is somewhat repetitive and challenging to complete, it allows participants to think about issues that we otherwise would not have considered.

Essential Service #1: Monitor Health Status to Identify Health Problems

This service includes:

- C Assessment of statewide health status and its determinants, including the identification of health threats and the determination of health service needs.**
- C Attention to the vital statistics and health status of specific groups that are at higher risk for health threats than the general population.**
- C Identification of community assets and resources which support the SPHS in promoting health and improving quality of life.**
- C Utilization of technology and other methods to interpret and communicate health information to diverse audiences in different sectors.**
- C Collaboration in integrating and managing public health related information systems.**

Indicator	State Public Health Agency Score	State Public Health System Score
Planning and Implementation:	3	3
Technical Assistance and Support:	3	3
Evaluation and Quality Improvement:	2	2
Professional and Technical Expertise:	4	4
Resources:	2	2

1 = not at all or minimally; 2 = partially; 3 = substantially; 4 = fully or almost fully

Comments on Tool:

- difficulty answering overall questions
- yes/no response might work better. "Partially" at 25-75% is simply too broad

Essential Service #2: Diagnose and Investigate Health Problems and Health Hazards

This service includes:

- C** Epidemiologic investigation of disease outbreaks and patterns of infectious and chronic diseases, injuries, and other adverse health conditions.
- C** Population-based screening, case-finding, investigation, and the scientific analysis of health problems.
- C** Rapid screening, high volume testing, and active infectious disease epidemiology investigations.

Indicator	State Public Health Agency Score	State Public Health System Score
Planning and Implementation:	2	2
Technical Assistance and Support:	2	2
Evaluation and Quality Improvement:	3	3
Professional and Technical Expertise:	4	3
Resources:	4	4

1 = not at all or minimally; 2 = partially; 3 = substantially; 4 = fully or almost fully

Comments on Tool:

- language and terms are vague, like “access” and need clarification
- challenging to answer questions because of the diverse and broad areas covered (varies by disease, threat) - difficult to know where to start

Essential Service #3: Inform, Educate, and Empower People about Health Issues

This service includes:

- C Health information, education, and promotion activities designed to reduce health risk and promote better health.**
- C Health communication plans and activities such as media advocacy and social marketing.**
- C Accessible health information and educational resources.**
- C Health education and promotion program partnerships with schools, faith communities, work sites, personal care providers, and others to implement and reinforce health promotion programs and messages.**

Indicator	State Public Health Agency Score	State Public Health System Score
Planning and Implementation:	3	3
Technical Assistance and Support:	2	2
Evaluation and Quality Improvement:	1	2
Professional and Technical Expertise:	2	2
Resources:	1	2

1 = not at all or minimally; 2 = partially; 3 = substantially; 4 = fully or almost fully

Comments on Tool:

- seemed geared toward health education, promotion and marketing
- need clearer definitions of health information, education, and promotion
- hard to generalize issues across the agencies

Essential Services #4: Mobilize Partnerships to Identify and Solve Health Problems

This service includes:

- C** The organization and leadership to convene, facilitate, and collaborate with statewide partners (including those not typically considered to be health-related) to identify public health priorities and create effective solutions to solve state and local health problems.
- C** The building of a statewide partnership to collaborate in the performance of public health functions and essential services in an effort to utilize the full range of available human and material resources to improve the state’s health status.
- C** Assistance to partners and communities to organize and undertake actions to improve the health of the state’s communities.

Indicator	State Public Health Agency Score	State Public Health System Score
Planning and Implementation:	3	3
Technical Assistance and Support:	2	3
Evaluation and Quality Improvement:	1	--
Professional and Technical Expertise:	2	2
Resources:	2	2

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Comments on Tool:

- terms are vague, “access” vs. “implementation” for professional and technical expertise
- “potential partners” is huge

Essential Service #5: Develop Policies and Plans that Support Individual and Statewide Health Efforts

This service includes:

- C** Systematic health planning that relies on appropriate data, develops and tracks measurable health objectives, and establishes strategies and actions to guide community health improvement at the state and local levels.
- C** Development of legislation, codes, rules, regulations, or ordinances to guide the practice of public health and medical care determined through analysis, selection, and advocacy of policies needed to strengthen preventive and curative care and promote and protect the health of the public.
- C** The democratic process of dialogue and debate between groups affected by the proposed health plans and policies is needed prior to adoption of such plans or policies.

Indicator	State Public Health Agency Score	State Public Health System Score
Planning and Implementation:	4	3
Technical Assistance and Support:	3	3
Evaluation and Quality Improvement:	2	2
Professional and Technical Expertise:	4	4
Resources:	2	2

1 = not at all or minimally; 2 = partially; 3 = substantially; 4 = fully or almost fully

Comments on Tool:

- terms are vague such as “comprehensive”, “cohesive”, “regularly”, “progress review”
- TA questions are harder to answer because what the system supports varies by dept.
- there is a difference between having “access” and utilizing what is available
- unclear of the importance of resources being available “in-house”

Essential Service #6: Enforce Laws and Regulations that Protect Health and Ensure Safety

This service includes:

- C** Enforcement of sanitary codes, especially in the food industry.
- C** Protection of drinking water supplies.
- C** Enforcement of clean air standards.
- C** Animal control.
- C** Follow-up of hazards (e.g., abating lead and radon exposure), preventable injuries (e.g., reinspection of workplace following safety violations), and exposure-related diseases (e.g., increased monitoring of restaurant employees' hand washing after a report of salmonella) identified in occupational and community settings.
- C** Enforcement of regulations and rules governing institutional care and health service delivery (e.g., laboratories, nursing homes, and home health care providers).
- C** Review of new drug, biologic, and medical device applications, and other enforcement activities involving laws and regulations designed to protect the public's health and ensure safety.

Indicator	State Public Health Agency Score	State Public Health System Score
Planning and Implementation:	3	3
Technical Assistance and Support:	2	2
Evaluation and Quality Improvement:	2	2
Professional and Technical Expertise:	2	2
Resources:	2	2

1 = not at all or minimally; 2 = partially; 3 = substantially; 4 = fully or almost fully

Comments on Tool:

- the scientific support for the tool needs to consider the legislative process because often times the perspectives don't match
- technology questions are complex because of infrastructure. The technology may be there, but the infrastructure does not support it.

Essential Service #7 Link People to Needed Personal Health Services and Assure the Provision of Health Care when Otherwise Unavailable

This service includes:

- C Assessment of access to and availability of quality personal health care services for the state's population.**
- C Assurances that access is available to a coordinated system of quality care which includes outreach services to link populations to preventive and curative care, medical services, case management, enabling social and mental health services, culturally and linguistically appropriate services, and health care quality review programs.**
- C Partnership with public, private, and voluntary sectors to provide populations with a coordinate system of health care.**
- C Development of a continuous improvement process to assure the equitable distribution of resources for those in greatest need**

Indicator	State Public Health Agency Score	State Public Health System Score
Planning and Implementation:	2	3
Technical Assistance and Support:	3	3
Evaluation and Quality Improvement:	2	2
Professional and Technical Expertise:	3	4
Resources:	2	2

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Comments on Tool:

- did not understand one question, so did not answer

Essential Service #8: Assure a Competent Public and Personal Health Care Workforce

This service includes:

- C Education, training, development, and assessment of health professional-- including partners, volunteers and other lay community health workers--to meet statewide needs for public and personal health services.**
- C Efficient processes for credentialing technical and professional health personnel.**
- C Adoption of continuous quality improvement and life-long learning programs.**
- C Partnerships with professional workforce development programs to assure relevant learning experiences for all participants.**
- C Continuing education in management and leadership development programs.**

Indicator	State Public Health Agency Score	State Public Health System Score
Planning and Implementation:	2	2
Technical Assistance and Support:	2	2
Evaluation and Quality Improvement:	1	1
Professional and Technical Expertise:	2	2
Resources:	3	2

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Comments on Tool:

- questions offer a snapshot of the system
- language is very wordy and terms not always consistent
- the language of the tool appears to have been developed by educators and academicians and has a lot of education jargon language. It needs to have a “plain language” edit.
- questions did not mesh with overall indicators
- questions of access do not address barriers
- seems to be a qualitative study that is trying to be made into a quantitative study

Essential Service #9 Evaluate Effectiveness, Accessibility, and Quality of Personal and Population-Based Health Services

This service includes:

- C** Evaluation and critical review of health programs, based on analyses of health status and service utilization data, are conducted to determine program effectiveness and to provide information necessary for allocating resources and reshaping programs for improved efficiency, effectiveness, and quality.

Indicator	State Public Health Agency Score	State Public Health System Score
Planning and Implementation:	2	2
Technical Assistance and Support:	1	1
Evaluation and Quality Improvement:	1	1
Professional and Technical Expertise:	2	2
Resources:	4	2

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Comments on Tool:

- language unclear, such as “monitoring”
- there is a difference between the state department and the state system

Essential Service #10: Research for New Insights and Innovative Solutions to Health Problems

This service includes:

- C** A full continuum of research ranging from field-based efforts to foster change in public health practice to formal scientific research.
- C** Linkage with research institutions and other institutions of higher learning.
- C** Internal capacity to mount timely epidemiologic and economic analyses and conduct needed health services research.

Indicator	State Public Health Agency Score	State Public Health System Score
Planning and Implementation:	2	2
Technical Assistance and Support:	3	3
Evaluation and Quality Improvement:	2	2
Professional and Technical Expertise:	4	4
Resources:	2	2

1 = not at all or minimally; 2 = partially; 3 = substantially; 4 = fully or almost fully

Comments on Tool:

- there is a difference between “research” and “assessment” and the system’s role in it.
- no real standard to evaluate public health systems or examples of what it is to achieve this model.
- questions were subjective, but had a quantitative scale
- difficult to make judgement about everything that is going on in the system
- there is a difference between the state public health system and state agency