



Public Health

We all have a stake in a strong public health system that supports **programs and policies to prevent disease** and is prepared for any major health emergency.



Through its Public Health team, the Foundation is focusing on three integrated strategies:

1. Improving the performance and impact of public health agencies.
2. Building the evidence for what works to improve the quality and effectiveness of public health practice and policy.
3. Increasing the use of public health laws and policies that improve the public's health.

With our partners including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Association of State and Territorial Health Officials, National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO), National Network of Public Health Institutes (NNPHI), National Association of Local Boards of Health and many state and local health agencies, we seek to establish a culture of continuous quality improvement (QI) in public health backed by national voluntary accreditation for state and local public health agencies scheduled to roll out in 2011.

The Foundation has an ambitious goal—to ensure that at least 60 percent of people in the United States are served by an accredited health agency by 2015. Accreditation will establish standards and benchmarks for essential public health services and engage health departments in ongoing quality improvement. The Public Health Accreditation Board, the national public health accreditation body established and funded in part by RWJF, will begin accepting applications for national accreditation in 2011.

Health departments around the country have begun preparing for national accreditation and this requires a commitment to quality improvement. We are helping health departments prepare by providing them with the knowledge and tools they need to implement continuous quality



improvement. With our partners, we provide technical assistance—training on “why” and “how” to implement a quality improvement project, tools to measure progress, access to QI experts, workshops and collaborative forums that allow health departments to work within and across county and state lines to gain knowledge and experience on how to improve their programs and services. Our goal is to ensure that at least half of local health departments and 80 percent of state health departments in the United States receive technical assistance on QI and performance improvement by 2015. In 2007 when we began tracking this, only 302 local health departments (11 percent) and one state health department (2 percent) were receiving assistance on quality and performance improvement. Today more than 26 percent of state health departments and over 19 percent of local health departments are receiving assistance. The growing emphasis on quality and performance among public health departments around the country is helping build the groundswell for national public health accreditation.

In 2008 we invested in a third round of our *Multistate Collaborative: Lead States in Public Health Quality Improvement Program*. Lead States, managed by the National Network of Public Health Institutes, brings state and local health departments together with other stakeholders—including local public health institutes, public health associations, health care providers and universities—to improve public health services and the health of their communities by implementing quality improvement practices and preparing for national accreditation. Sixteen states from a pool of 25 were selected for this round of the program. Up to 221 local health departments, within these 16 states, will be working collaboratively to implement QI projects that will help address specific health outcomes, such as decreasing the incidence of vaccine-preventable diseases. In addition, a QI project focuses on improving how public health services are delivered, such as helping states collect and use health data or improve customer service.

This year we also awarded a grant to NACCHO to support 56 local health departments as they prepare for accreditation. The award recipients include 30 single local health departments, one tribal health department and 25 local health departments working together in five collaboratives. Each of the 56 sites is assessing its capacity to meet local health department standards and will implement a quality improvement project to address areas of opportunity identified in the self-assessment.

Both of these programs, continued support of Public Health Accreditation Board and new efforts to evaluate the impact of quality improvement in health departments will continue into 2009. As the public health community prepares for the roll out of national accreditation in 2011, we will continue to work with state, local, tribal and territorial health departments and its national partners to help them engage with health departments in preparation for accreditation. By improving the quality of governmental public health and continuing to build

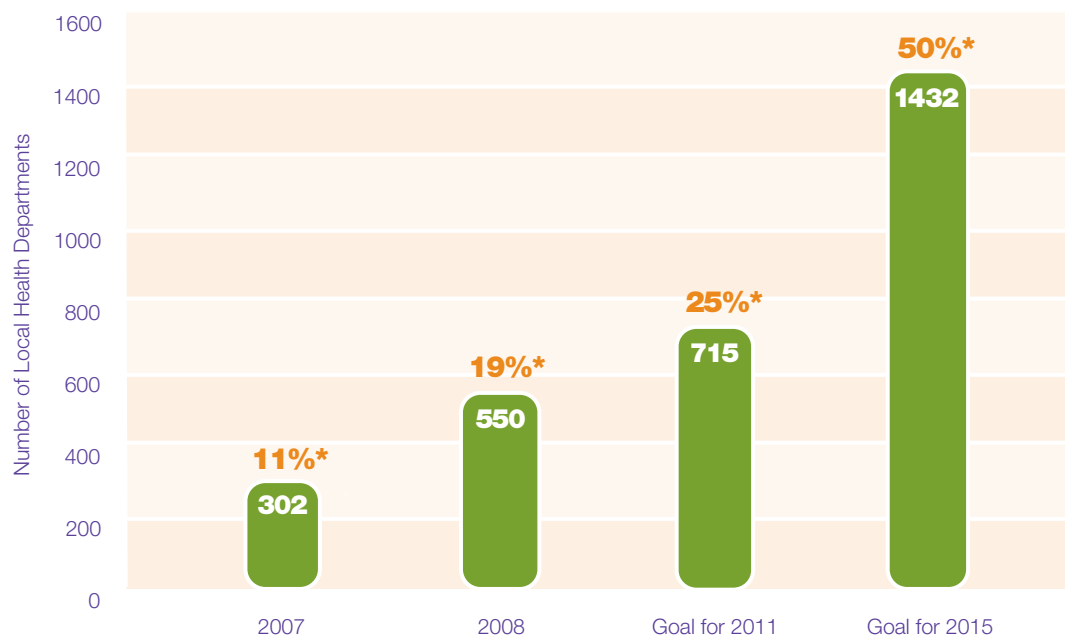


the evidence about what works, we, with the help of our partners, can improve the health of every community across the country.

For additional information about our initiatives and objectives, visit

www.rwjf.org/publichealth.

Number and Percentage of Local Health Departments Receiving Technical Assistance for Quality Improvement



* Percentage of total local health departments

Source: National Network of Public Health Institutes, National Association of County and City Health Officials and the Public Health Informatics Institute, 2008.