NACCHO/CDC Accreditation Support Initiative

Public Health – Idaho North Central District (ID)

Final Report

1. Project Overview

Public Health – Idaho North Central District (PH-INCD) is a rural health district located in north central Idaho with a population of 106,217. The District encompasses five counties; Clearwater, Idaho, Latah, Lewis and Nez Perce. Each of those counties, with the exception of Latah, encompasses part of the 855 square miles of the Nez Perce Indian Reservation. We are governed by a seven member policy Board of Health that is supportive of accreditation.

During this project, PH-INCD developed a formal QI policy and plan. Our QI policy and QI plan were implemented following Board of Health involvement and approval. A QI Team was then established and received training. Following the QI Team training, we felt certain that all staff in the District would benefit from a grounding in QI as well. We contacted the North West Center for Public Health Practice in Seattle, WA and they assisted in developing and presenting a full day training on QI-principles and practices, to every staff in the District. This was an amazing opportunity for staff to hear the same messages from an expert (Bud Nicola) in the QI field. Our Director said, "The best thing I can do for my staff is keep them well trained. Increased skills and knowledge contribute to job satisfaction and retention. This staff training was wonderful for skill building of all staff."

We were also excited that several Board of Health members attended the training, as well as met with Bud during their regular board meeting. Having the commitment and support of the Board of Health and the District Director and Management team ensures a successful outcome, as well as an ongoing critical focus for the District.

The staff began working with their QI team leaders to identify processes for improvement, and document QI projects they have identified.

2. Reflections: Successes, Challenges, and Lessons Learned

Our District director fully supports accreditation and having our Health District accredited by 2013. She works with our Board of Health to elicit their buy in and commitment to accreditation as well. Having the commitment and support of the Board of Health and the District Director and Management team ensures a successful outcome, as well as an ongoing critical focus for the District. In the training evaluations, we noted several comments from staff that indicated they were not sure QI fit in their daily work activities. This was a great opportunity for the QI Team leaders to meet in smaller groups with staff to help them personally identify QI projects and processes that they are currently involved in, but perhaps didn't recognize at part of the QI process. They have begun

documenting these QI activities in order to make them real to all staff.

One thing that became apparent was the enthusiasm and interest from the Board of Health members. Our policy making board is very passionate about Public Health and offering support for continued improvement in our Health District. We would recommend to others that they take the extra time to thoroughly engage the Board members in QI, and then make it a report back to the Board periodically throughout the year.

We are so appreciative for the opportunity these funds have given us to assist us in doing QI the right way.

3. Impact and Next Steps

With limited resources and decreasing staff, the additional funding we received enabled us to provide QI training to all staff, dedicate resources to establish a QI Team and build an adequate QI infrastructure.

Staff now apply QI tools and principles to opportunities for improvement in the agency, with emphasis placed on addressing measures related to the existing performance management system (quarterly strategic planning). In the past, program managers and staff used a variety of methods to improve measureable outcomes; the use of PDSA and QI Project Teams will provide a strategic and uniform method for planning, implementing, reporting and documenting change.

Over the next year or two, we will continue to implement the PDSA cycle and involve all staff in this improvement cycle. According to Director Moehrle, "Our agency-wide culture of Quality Improvement will demonstrate we are meeting the standards and measures needed for an accredited Local Health Department."