



Raise a Glass! to the Bloomfield Health Dept.

Residents, be proud! Unlike any other public health department in the state of New Jersey, Bloomfield Health & Human Services has scored a coveted accreditation from the national Public Health Accreditation Board.

The achievement – three years in the making and entirely voluntary – was hailed at the League of Municipalities annual convention two weeks ago in Atlantic City.

What does it mean for Bloomfield?

- Greater consideration for competitive public health grants.
- More outside towns requesting Bloomfield Health's paid expertise.
- Public assurance that Bloomfield Health aims to do the best job possible.

The five-year accreditation award was announced by PHAB in mid-November. It involved a peer-reviewed community health assessment, a community improvement plan, a strategic plan and management performance plans.

To maintain the accreditation, the department has to uphold its high standards for five years, with annual reports to PHAB to verify continuation of the standards.

"It's really about continuous quality improvement," said Bloomfield Health Department Director Karen Lore. "It puts us on a path of always having processes in place to make improvement – to constantly develop staff and to impact change in the community to create a culture of health."

After five years, when the accreditation expires, the department will need to conduct another community health assessment to renew the accreditation.

With visibility comes revenue

PHAB President Kaye Bender said, "In many communities, the health department is almost invisible to the public. That 'out of sight, out of mind' image can create opportunities for funding cuts."

With more visibility comes an expectation of greater success in applying for grants. Last year, Bloomfield Health was awarded roughly \$100,000 in state and federal grant monies. The accreditation could up the ante significantly.

Equally important, the accreditation could attract more attention from admiring outside health departments that have fewer resources and expertise. Currently Bloomfield has consulting contracts with Glen Ridge, Caldwell, Lincoln Park, West Milford and Mountain Lakes. They rely on Bloomfield to administer public nursing, human services, health education and environmental inspections.

In 2014, "interlocal contracts" brought in more than \$170,000 in a revenue to Bloomfield. The money was used to expand public health programs specifically benefitting Bloomfield residents.

"This accreditation is an outstanding achievement," said Lore. "The journey has been long but the process has been well worth the effort. As a result, the department is now positioned as a leader in public health in New Jersey, meeting the highest standards."