

Introduction to Accreditation

2006

OVERVIEW

The Ontario Council on Community Health Accreditation (O.C.C.H.A.) was formed in 1981. It provides an independent, voluntary, peer evaluation of the administrative and operational aspects of local and regional public health agencies, including program planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Its *conviction* is that provision of quality public health services requires sound administrative mechanisms. O.C.C.H.A.'s program grew out of the public health drive for continuous self-improvement. O.C.C.H.A.'s mission is to promote accountability and excellence in public health programs and services.

O.C.C.H.A.'s standards, against which agencies are reviewed, have been developed by Ontario public health professionals, in consultation with their fellow staff and board members across the province.

The 10 members of O.C.C.H.A.'s Board of Directors are nominated by the provincial organizations representing Ontario public health professionals and boards of health.

Any of the thirty-six public health units in Ontario may obtain an application form, documentation and full submission instructions from the O.C.C.H.A. office. Those that meet the criteria outlined in the documents may apply by following the preparatory steps indicated in the documents and by submitting the completed forms along with the fee. Preparation for accreditation varies according to which standards are met by the agency when it first begins preparations.

Applications are examined by the Principles and Standards Committee of the O.C.C.H.A. Board of Directors. Based on those applications, agencies considered ready for an accreditation survey are accepted into the program. Others are encouraged to prepare themselves for reapplication at a later date.

Surveys are scheduled within 90 days of acceptance of the application (unless this deadline is extended by mutual agreement) at a date convenient to the agency. They are conducted by experienced public health professionals, who have been trained as surveyors. Depending on the size of the agency, these surveys may take from two to four days on site in addition to a special orientation session geared specifically to the agency to be surveyed. Surveyors' days at the agency are spent examining supporting documentation and interviewing agency personnel and representatives from community agencies.

The benefits of these surveys extend far beyond their immediate purpose of assessment for accreditation. Surveyed agencies have found that seeing their own operation through the eyes of experienced peer reviewers provided them with a

useful, more objective check on their internal organization and effective ideas for further improving their programs and services to the community.

All survey documents are confidential. Copies are provided only to the O.C.C.H.A. Board and staff. On the basis of the report and a great deal of discussion both in camera and with members of the survey team, O.C.C.H.A. awards or withholds accreditation. A copy of the accreditation report and judgement is issued to the applicant. It is comprised of the board's decision, plus any requirements, recommendations or suggestions that the OCCHA Board feels will help the agency to understand the award. Accreditation may be awarded for two, three, four or five years. After that time, the agency concerned must reapply and be resurveyed. A maintenance fee is charged in the second, third, fourth and fifth year of accreditation to support the on-going activities of O.C.C.H.A.

Each agency is given 14 days to file its intention to appeal the findings of an accreditation survey. The documentation for such an appeal must be submitted within 34 days of the agency's receipt of the accreditation report and judgement. If an appeal is received, the O.C.C.H.A. Board meets with representatives of the agency to discuss the supporting argument for the appeal. The board then meets in camera to discuss the appeal based on evidence presented. The findings in the revised accreditation report may or may not effect a change in the accreditation award. The decision of the O.C.C.H.A. Board on the appeal is final.

If no intention of appeal is received within the 14-day time period, the judgement is considered final. However, the agency is encouraged to send the O.C.C.H.A. Board comments on the accreditation process or on the content of the accreditation report. These comments are very beneficial in ensuring the continuing growth and improvement of O.C.C.H.A.'s accreditation program.

To avoid a conflict of interest, O.C.C.H.A. Board policy requires any Director associated with an applying agency to declare that fact at the time of application. The Director(s) concerned must then withdraw from all board considerations of that application and from the board's consideration of related survey results or any related appeal.

STEP-BY-STEP PROCEDURES

1. The agency requests an application form and related documents from the O.C.C.H.A. office. The Agency Questionnaire including the Application Form for an Accreditation Survey, along with the Accreditation Principles, Standards, Components and Definitions, will be forwarded to the agency.
2. The agency forwards the Application Form along with 6 copies each of the completed Agency Questionnaire and required attachments. A cheque for

the accreditation fee is also required at the time of application to the O.C.C.H.A. office. (See attached fee schedule).

3. Each application received is first examined by O.C.C.H.A.'s Executive Director for completeness. An analysis of the questionnaire is prepared and forwarded to the Principles and Standards Committee for review. The Committee recommends proceeding with a survey or advising that further preparation is needed.
 - a) If the application is approved, the Executive Director formally informs the Medical Officer of Health of the agency and arranges a mutually agreeable date for the survey (within 90 days, unless extended by mutual agreement). The necessary number of surveyors are then selected. The names of the surveyors are conveyed to the Medical Officer of Health.
 - b) If it is decided that a survey would be premature, the board's decision and general suggestions of areas requiring further preparation are conveyed to the applicant and the accreditation fee (less an administrative charge) is returned.
4.
 - a) If the applicant encounters an unavoidable and unforeseeable problem that makes the agreed survey date impossible, O.C.C.H.A. makes every effort to reschedule the survey and proceeds on the new survey date.
 - b) If the applicant cancels a survey after it has been approved and arranged by O.C.C.H.A., and notifies O.C.C.H.A. in writing at least four weeks prior to the scheduled date, it receives a refund of half the accreditation fee. No refund is made for cancellation(s) less than four weeks prior to the scheduled date.
5. The Executive Director communicates with the Medical Officer of Health and/or the accreditation coordinator to confirm the interview schedule and to finalize any survey plans.
6. On the evening prior to the survey, the survey team conducts a pre-survey meeting with the Executive Director to review and clarify any information.
7. The survey commences with an Entrance Conference followed by a "walk-through" of the agency, review of documents and interviews of personnel and community agencies (in accordance with individual assignments from the Executive Director).

8. On the last day (after a brief preparation meeting of the survey team) an Exit conference is scheduled with the Medical Officer of Health, senior staff, accreditation coordinator – or other individuals selected by the agency. This meeting allows for some constructive feedback from the surveyors.
9. Immediately following the survey, the surveyors meet to coordinate their observations and submit their completed reports to O.C.C.H.A. All survey team members complete surveyor worksheets. The cumulative report is submitted to O.C.C.H.A. within two weeks after the completion of the survey.
10. The survey report is first considered by O.C.C.H.A.'s Principles and Standards Committee. Their discussion includes clarifying, with surveyors, any areas of uncertainty arising from the committee's review of all documentation and reports. The committee then recommends to the Board that the agency be accredited for two, three, four or five years and drafts an appropriate accreditation report. The O.C.C.H.A. Board forms its final decision, which is conveyed to the agency through the accreditation report and judgement letter.
11. Within 14 days of receiving the judgement (which includes the accreditation decision and any requirements, recommendations or suggestions the O.C.C.H.A. Board feels will be helpful, as well as areas of commendation), the agency must state any intention to appeal the decision and must file a written appeal within a further 20 days (i.e. 34 days after receipt of the judgement). If no notice of intention to appeal has been received within the 14 day period, the O.C.C.H.A. judgement is considered final.
12. After the O.C.C.H.A. judgement is finalized any agency that is awarded accreditation is required to sign and file with O.C.C.H.A. a Statement of Agreement to the Accreditation Terms and Conditions (Page 6). Upon receipt of this statement, the official O.C.C.H.A. certificate is issued to the agency. This certificate indicates the accreditation term (two, three, four or five years) and is held by the agency during the term, although it remains the property of O.C.C.H.A. Failure to maintain the Terms and Conditions of Accreditation may result in withdrawal of this certificate.
13. Each subsequent year, the accredited agency will receive an O.C.C.H.A. invoice for its Year 2, Year 3, Year 4 and Year 5 maintenance fees. Non-payment of these fees may be considered a violation of the accreditation Terms and Conditions and may result in a withdrawal of accreditation.

14. Six months before the expiry of the current term of accreditation, O.C.C.H.A. forwards the Agency Questionnaire and Application Form for completion and arranges a survey for a further term.

15. Under the Terms and Conditions of the accreditation award, O.C.C.H.A. reserves the right to investigate one or more aspects of an agency's operations. On occasion, such investigations may result in a decision to cancel an agency's accreditation and to require the certificate be returned. In such an event, the agency is entitled to appeal the decertification decision under the same procedures and conditions outlined in Step 11.

O.C.C.H.A. ACCREDITATION FEES

The survey fee must accompany the application. This fee covers the cost of the survey plus the first year's maintenance fee.

Fees for the second, third, fourth and fifth years of accreditation must be paid upon receiving an invoice from O.C.C.H.A. which will be sent in advance of the year to be covered.

SURVEY FEE*	ANNUAL MAINTENANCE FEE*
\$9,450 (\$2950 + \$6500) April 1, 2007	\$2950
\$9,525 (\$3025 + \$6500) April 1, 2008	\$3025

**All fees are reviewed annually and adjusted to reflect inflation. In addition, all fees are subject to G.S.T.*

**AGREEMENT TO TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF O.C.C.H.A.
ACCREDITATION
(Sample Only)**

In accepting O.C.C.H.A. accreditation for the period of x to y, our agency subscribes to the Principles and Standards set forth in the O.C.C.H.A. publication entitled **Accreditation Principles, Standards, Components and Definitions** and agrees to the following Terms and Conditions:

1. We agree to strive to achieve the standards set forth by O.C.C.H.A. and in no case to allow our agency's standards to fall below the level they had achieved at the time of the O.C.C.H.A. survey on which our current accreditation is based.
2. In the event that our agency's accreditation award requires us to report to O.C.C.H.A. by a certain date on steps taken to overcome specific deficiencies, we agree to fulfil that requirement.
3. We agree to immediately notify OCCHA of any significant organizational changes (including dissolution, amalgamation with other agencies or internal re-organization).
4. We agree that during the period of this accreditation, O.C.C.H.A. may investigate one or more aspects of our agency's operations.
5. We agree that O.C.C.H.A. remains the owner of the accreditation certificate awarded to our agency, and may withdraw this certificate if the above Terms and Conditions are not maintained, subject only to the right of our agency to appeal to the O.C.C.H.A. Board to review any such decision before it becomes final.
6. We agree to pay to O.C.C.H.A. such fees as may be required to participate in the accreditation program, in accordance with the current O.C.C.H.A. fee scale.

Signed: _____

Title: _____

Public Health Agency: _____

Date: _____