

Highlights

Why We Did This Audit

The Health Department’s Communicable Disease Prevention and Public Health Preparedness Division (CDP/PHP) plays an important role in protecting the public by monitoring, investigating, and responding to communicable disease and bioterrorism threats.

CDP/PHP addresses the city’s business plan departmental strategic objective to “identify and mitigate community health hazards by monitoring and responding to communicable disease threats.”

Background

CDP/PHP monitors and investigates diseases of public health concern including diseases city code mandates medical professionals report such as tuberculosis, sexually transmitted diseases, and HIV/AIDS.

The division can use performance measures to determine whether it is achieving its goals, enhance decision making, and identify opportunities for improvement.

Our audit focused on determining whether selected CDP/PHP performance measures possess recommended performance measure characteristics.

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PERFORMANCE AUDIT

Communicable Disease Prevention and Public Health Preparedness Division Performance Measures

What We Found

The Communicable Disease Prevention and Public Health Preparedness Division’s performance measures include many recommended characteristics of performance measures.

Most measures were at least partially relevant in measuring the level of performance in meeting a division or department objective or policy. One measure does not reflect the division’s performance, and therefore is not a relevant performance measure for the division.

When appropriate, graphs were used to increase the user’s understandability of the measures, however, the division could improve the performance measures’ understandability by improving measure titles and expanding supplemental descriptions of the measures.

The division established performance measure targets and compared results to those targets. The division also reports the performance measure results timely helping ensure they are still useful when reported. One measure was not consistently calculated between review periods making it difficult to compare performance over time.

Finally, all of the relevant measures had data entry and data security controls, which contributes to reliability; however, there were some reliability weaknesses including not maintaining the original dataset for quality assurance purposes, a calculation error, late data entry, and lack of a systematic quality review process and documentation of the measures’ calculation method.

Recommended Performance Measure Characteristics and Description	
Characteristic	Description
Relevance	Provides basis for understanding how an entity is meeting its goals and objectives to assist in decision-making or assess accountability.
Understandability	Communicated in a manner that is easily understood.
Comparability	Comparisons to prior fiscal years, targets, standards, or benchmarks in order to understand the level of performance.
Timeliness	Reported while still useful in making decisions and assessing accountability.
Consistency	Consistently reporting from period to period allows for comparing performance over time and gaining understanding of the measure over time.
Reliability	Verifiable, free from bias, and represents what it claims to represent.

What We Recommend

To improve the Communicable Disease Prevention and Public Health Preparedness Division’s performance measures, we recommend the director of health:

- Improve the relevance of one measure by expanding its target population.
- Improve understandability by clarifying measure titles and providing additional detail in accompanying descriptions.
- Improve reliability by ensuring timely data entry, implementing a systematic review process, and documenting calculation methods.
- Eliminate the measure not relevant to the division’s goals or objectives.

Management agreed with the recommendations.