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Pinellas County Health Department Earns Public Health Emergency Preparedness Recognition *Agency Nationally Designated As Being "Public Health Ready"*

As local health departments nationwide strive to protect the public from infectious diseases, bioterrorism, natural disasters, and other public health threats, the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) has recognized the Pinellas County Health Department for its ability to respond to public health emergencies.

PCHD met the comprehensive preparedness benchmarks required by Project Public Health Ready (PPHR), a unique partnership between NACCHO and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

"We are proud to have been recognized by Project Public Health Ready for our high level of preparedness," said Claude M. Dharamraj, MD, MPH, FAAP, the health department's director. "We will continue to improve our ability to quickly and effectively respond to any public health crisis in Pinellas."

"NACCHO commends the Pinellas County Health Department for being a model of public health emergency preparedness," said Robert Pestronk, Executive Director of NACCHO. "The public health system is making great strides thanks to the good work of leaders in local public health preparedness such as this one."

Local health departments recognized by PPHR undergo a thorough evaluation process by peer review. PPHR required PCHD to meet expectations in public health preparedness in three key areas: preparedness planning; workforce competency; and demonstration of all-hazards readiness through exercises or a response to a real event.

The recognition confirms that PCHD has an emergency response plan in place, the plan is connected to other jurisdictional emergency response plans, agency staff members are trained, and the plan is exercised and used during public health emergencies.

For more information on all Project Public Health Ready recognized sites and project tools and resources, go to <http://www.naccho.org/topics/emergency/pphr.cfm>.

For information about the Pinellas County Health Department, go to www.PinellasHealth.com.

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