



COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONAL HEALTH INC.

We offer excellence and effective leadership in accreditation by fostering quality, innovation and learning within health and social service organizations to attain and maintain a state of optimal health.

Since 1998, the non-profit **Community Organizational Health Inc.** (COHI) has been fostering learning and quality in community-based health and social service organizations through its **Building Healthier Organizations** (BHO) Accreditation Program. It is a process for organizations to evaluate their services and systems against acknowledged standards that support sustainability and learning.

The program serves community health centres, community mental health services, community support services, Aboriginal health access centres, and family services, among others. BHO is unique in bringing over ten years' experience to addressing areas of primary health care, health promotion, community engagement and partnership development.

BHO is known as the trusted option for community-based accreditation.

What is a healthy organization?

COHI believes that **healthy organizations** are those prepared to manage change in creative, innovative, productive ways without sacrificing quality. Healthy organizations:

- Are client-centered – respectful of and responsive to immediate concerns and to how clients are affected by the wider context in which they live.
- Support optimal outcomes for individuals, families and communities.
- Promote client and community participation in the organization – from governance to planning to service delivery.
- Create a positive work environment – one that supports continuous learning and improvement and encourages innovation.
- Are accountable to stakeholders including clients, communities and funders.
- Actively address barriers to service and ensure quality regardless of client characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, race, geography and socio-economic status.

What resources are available to participating organizations?

To support organizations in their development and in the accreditation process, COHI's website features a **Resource Library of Good Practices** and highlights examples of **excellence and innovation** at BHO-accredited organizations. Also available is a **Roadmap to Building a Healthy Organization** and access to other resources.

Why participate in BHO?

BHO assesses organizations against a comprehensive set of standards that touch on all the critical underpinnings of a healthy organization's governance and operations. By participating, organizations demonstrate to their boards, clients, communities and funders that they function within widely accepted parameters of health and accountability. There is the potential to assess one's organization against community-based benchmarks.

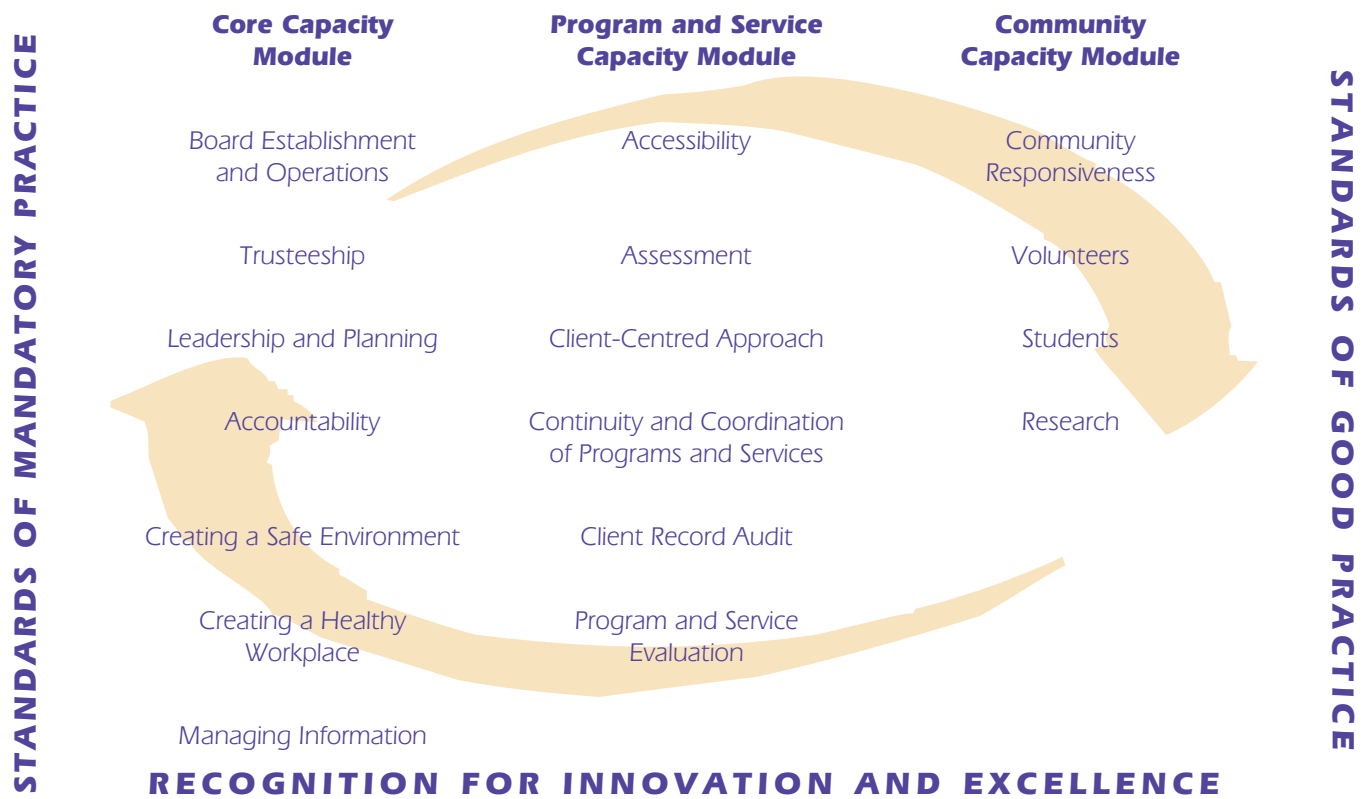
But, BHO is more than an accreditation process. The goal of BHO is to foster ongoing learning and improvement in community-based non-profits.

What participating organizations tell COHI

Evaluations of BHO consistently document the benefits of BHO to participating organizations. Over the past few years, what they most valued about BHO was the opportunity to use it to demonstrate accountability and excellence and how it promoted organizational development and learning. They wrote:

- "Good time to reflect on organization's value to community. Learning opportunity for new staff, sense of satisfaction for more experienced staff. Knowledge that 'we're on the right track.' Opportunity to record organization's milestones & history."
- "I appreciate the opportunity to place our house in order. I also find the indicators incredibly useful in the organization of our policy and procedures manuals."
- "I especially appreciated the suggestions which came at the end of the process. It was a great learning experience for me and for many others."
- "It brought to light many of the strengths of the organization and helped us to identify areas where there was a need for improvement. In some cases, the areas in need of improvement had already been voiced by staff, so to have an unbiased third party note the same findings was reassuring and will help to move us towards those improvements. The review team was wonderful, very relaxed and non threatening which helped staff feel comfortable."
- "I really learned a lot about our centre that I didn't know before. In my role as [a board member] I now am better informed about policy and governance."
- "Both the standards we were asked to meet and the diligence of the reviewers challenged us to examine our operations and to make the changes needed to strengthen our capacity to meet our responsibilities as a board."

The Building Healthier Organizations Framework



How does the accreditation process unfold?

Accreditation takes place over a three-year cycle with the participating organization first assessing itself against BHO standards and working to improve its systems to meet the standards.

A BHO Review visit is scheduled once every three years. Two months before the visit, the organization submits organizational documents such as its own policies, procedures, tools, reports, board minutes, etc. In addition, community and educational partner agencies are surveyed by COHI.

A BHO Review Team reviews the survey results and organizational documents, and then visits the organization to conduct interviews with the Board and all levels of staff. BHO Review Teams are comprised of a COHI team leader and one or two peers recruited from organizations participating in BHO and trained as reviewers.

The Review Team prepares a Preliminary Report and the organization is given time to provide a response to issues identified. A Final Report is prepared and reviewed by the COHI Board, which makes the final decision about granting accreditation. The Report provides feedback to the organization concerning its areas of strength and areas for development in relation to the BHO Standards. It also highlights where the organization demonstrates innovation and excellence.

After the review, the cycle starts again as the organization sets new goals in its continuous improvement process.

BHO Standards

BHO has two kinds of Standards:

- **Standards of Mandatory Practice** help organizations demonstrate they meet legislated requirements and actively manage risk.
- **Standards of Good Practice** promote ongoing reflection, learning and improvement in not-for-profit functioning.

Organizations are expected to meet all the Standards of Mandatory Practice and 75% of the Standards of Good Practice to be successfully accredited.

The standards are organized into **Three Modules**:

- The **Core Capacity Module** assesses organizations in relation to board governance, leadership and planning, accountability, building a healthy workplace, managing risk, and information management.
- The **Program and Service Capacity Module** reviews accessibility, assessment, client-centredness, continuity and coordination of service (external and internal), client record audit and evaluation.
- The **Community Capacity Module** provides a focus for reflecting on community responsiveness, volunteers, students and research and emphasizes the development of linkages and partnerships with organizations and community groups.

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