

The What, Who, When, Where, and Why

ABOUT SHIP AND HOW TO APPLY

"An Affiliated SHIP within a Community"

F A C T S H E E T

What is SHIP?

SHIP stands for the "State Health Improvement Plan" program implemented by the PA Department of Health (DoH). SHIP-Affiliated community-based health improvement *partnerSHIPS* work with the PA DoH to help improve health status and eliminate barriers to good health for all who reside within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. These local partnerships are a collaboration of public, private and voluntary organizations and individuals in a defined geographic area who meet regularly to plan and implement programs to improve the health status and to eliminate barriers within each community. The PA DoH and the community partnerships have mutually agreed to share responsibility and accountability for improving the health status of all residents.

SHIP has three main components:

1. A health plan that places emphasis on improving the health status of populations through planning that addresses the root or underlying causes of premature disease, death, and disability.
2. A plan for the Department of Health to engage with organized community-based health improvement partnerships to coordinate resources in meaningful ways and address local health improvement issues and priorities.
3. A commitment to increase access to relevant data and information necessary for communities to assess local health status and to develop local health improvement priorities.

Community partnerships begin their activities by conducting a broad-based health assessment to determine the needs of their residents. The results of this assessment are used to establish local priorities. The community partnership and its member organizations then work together to plan and implement programs to improve local community health outcomes.

Who started SHIP?

The PA DoH began its SHIP program to provide a new direction for health planning that allowed the PA DoH and the community-based health improvement partnerships more flexibility in working together to develop creative ways to improve health status and to address local health disparities.

The goals of the SHIP are:

1. To increase community empowerment by providing meaningful opportunity for community planning based on local needs;
2. To link community-based health plans with the allocation of Commonwealth resources to the degree possible;
3. To establish partnerships among local government, state, and local partners committed to sharing the risk, responsibility, and resources to foster the coordination of health resources along the spectrum of prevention, acute care, and long-term care; and
4. To shift the mode of community health planning from a prescriptive model to a shared responsibility model.

When was SHIP established?

Planning for SHIP began with a stakeholder conference convened by the PA DoH in November 1997 to ensure broad participation in planning the program and developing the roles of both the state and the SHIP-Affiliated partnerships. SHIP began as a pilot program with seven local partnerships in 1999. The current State Health Improvement Plan 2001-2005 was issued in July 2001. This plan focuses on the prevention of disease and disability, the coordination of resources, interagency collaboration and improved government responsiveness to community health planning priorities. In the winter of 2005, the PA DoH convened health improvement plan,

partnering, and data collection committees to begin development of the State Health Improvement Plan for 2006-2010. This plan will be completed in late 2005.

Where are SHIPS located?

There are 63 community-based health improvement partnerships located throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. These 60 partnerships serve 58 of Pennsylvania's 67 counties and nearly 70% of the total state population. A roster of SHIP-affiliated partnerships can be found at: [community-based health improvement partnerships](http://www.health.state.pa.us) on the PA DoH website (<http://www.health.state.pa.us>).

Why were SHIPS formed?

The PA DoH recognizes the importance of the community-based health improvement partnerships' role as leaders in bringing all residents together to promote effective health improvement strategies, including the assessing and prioritizing local needs and the planning and coordination of local resources. It also recognizes that these community partnerships require greater local determination in the selection of health improvement priorities. In this role, the SHIP-Affiliated partnerships have greater opportunities to promote flexibility and creativity in pursuing solutions to community health disparities. SHIP is the state's ongoing process to improve the health of its residents in line with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services "Healthy People 2010" goals.

How can communities apply for SHIP status?

Key elements of a community partnership's readiness are measured in three stages:

- 1) **planning and development** – data collection and assessment initiated – local partnership structure – mission identification under development;
- 2) **operational** – needs assessment completed – mission and priorities defined – health improvement projects underway; and
- 3) **sustained** – health improvement projects completed and outcomes tracked – comprehensive linkages within the community – revision of original needs assessment underway.

Community partnerships at any developmental level may apply for SHIP-affiliation. Program guidance can be found on the PA DoH website under [State Health Improvement Plan Community Guide for SHIP Affiliated Partnerships](#) or by contacting one of the PA DoH's six District Offices. The district office will work with the partnership to determine if it is ready for affiliation and to assist in the completion of the survey form. SHIP affiliation is voluntary and not regulatory in any way. The actual affiliation process begins when a partnership submits a partnership survey form and a letter of interest expressing its desire to participate to the Secretary of Health. The survey form is available by contacting the DOH's district offices or the Bureau of Health Planning at 717-772-5298.

Once the PA DoH receives the survey and the letter of intent, it convenes an informal Affiliation Workgroup to evaluate the level of the community's readiness for SHIP affiliation. This workgroup is comprised of representatives from the Bureau of Health Planning and the Bureau of Community Health Systems, the Health Policy Board, and the Executive Director of the Department of Health district where the partnership is located. If the application is approved, a letter offering affiliation status is sent from the Secretary of Health to the partnership. Shortly after receiving the letter, the partnership and the DOH's District Director meet to identify partnership priorities, including partnership development status issues regarding priorities, objectives, partnership responsibilities and the DOH's responsibilities.

If the partnership does not meet the criteria for approval, the PA DoH provides technical assistance to the partnership to address its concerns.

Further information about SHIP is available on the PA Department of Health website (<http://www.health.state.pa.us>) or by calling 1-877-PAHealth.

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