

Capacity Assessment Key Findings

Bathing Beaches

In the fall of 2022, the Office of Local and Regional Health conducted a Capacity Assessment of local health departments in Massachusetts to evaluate local public health's current ability to provide basic public health services based on their available resources, including staffing levels, funding, and training. The first-ever Massachusetts Local Public Health Performance Standards, which defined basic levels of services and workforce credentials and training, framed the assessment. As part of this assessment, a qualitative review of documentation submitted by municipalities was conducted, focusing on various subject areas to evaluate the implementation of crucial public health services.

The bathing beaches documents included the past five lab results for one beach and an opening inspection (all documentation from 2022).



1

TIMELY FOLLOW-UP AND ENFORCEMENT

Timely follow-up and enforcement procedures are crucial for addressing identified issues during bathing beach inspections.

- Chain of custody documentation is important to ensure there was effective follow-through.
- Including dates on inspection forms is necessary to determine when follow-up action is needed.
- Implementing clear procedures is essential to ensure that follow-up tasks are completed, including resampling, closures, and enforcement actions.



2

STANDARDIZATION OF OPENING INSPECTION FORMS

Opening inspections for beaches plays an essential role in ensuring the safety of beachgoers and identifying potential hazards or sanitary issues.

- Thorough inspections included inspections of the water quality, sanitation, lifeguard training, and the condition of amenities like bathhouses and snack bars.
- There is an opportunity for the development of a standardized form to aid in improving the consistency of inspections across municipalities.



3

LAB RESULTS FOLLOW-UP

Most [98%] of the lab results that were submitted were of high proficiency.

- Good lab results included the date a sample was received, the date it was analyzed, and the end result.
- If the sample did not meet the requirements, documentation that a resampling was completed must be included.



4

ADDITIONAL TRAINING

Comprehensive training of best practices is necessary to improve bathing beaches opening inspections.

- Training could include understanding acceptable limits, identifying hazards, proper water sampling techniques, and how to conduct a comprehensive opening inspection.
- 14 out of the requested 97 (14%) bathing beaches opening inspections were submitted, which could indicate a gap in training for proper completion and documentation.



Good bathing beaches documentation is characterized by well-structured inspection forms that maintain clarity and consistency, effectively separating different sections to enhance comprehensibility. Sample collections should include critical details such as dates of receipt, analysis results indicating compliance or non-compliance, and information regarding any required resampling efforts.

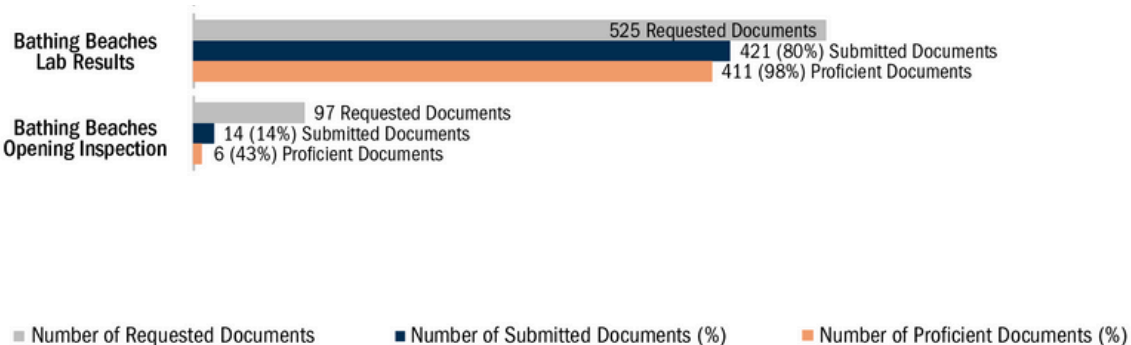
Bathing Beaches

Qualitative Findings

The tables below outline the reasons each type of bathing beaches document did not meet the proficiency standard. **The most frequently selected determinations are bolded in red and ordered by frequency from greatest to least.**

The figure to the right presents the percentage of submitted documents and their proficiency for the bathing beaches category. The most significant issue for bathing beaches was that the form was insufficient or not approved.

BACKUP DOCUMENTATION RESULTS



BATHING BEACHES OPENING INSPECTION

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Form insufficient or not approved

Items relating to competencies of beach workers not addressed properly

Critical fields not completed

Follow-up action not completed or documented

Reinspection not completed or documented

Issue that may put bathers at risk not properly addressed

Issue that may contribute to a waterborne illness outbreak not properly addressed

BATHING BEACHES LAB RESULTS

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Issue that may put bathers at risk not properly addressed

Form insufficient or not approved

Critical fields not completed

Follow-up action not completed or documented