

Capacity Assessment Key Findings

NUISANCES

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 Massachusetts Local Public Health Performance Standards framed the assessment, which defined basic levels of services and workforce credentials and training. 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 nuisance documents included documentation related to the last five closed complaints.



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CLARIFYING WHAT IS/IS NOT A NUISANCE

The document submissions indicated that there needs to be a universal understanding of what constitutes a nuisance.

- Nuisance is not necessarily synonymous with a complaint. Since interpretations of what counts as a nuisance vary between health departments, there is a unique opportunity to collaborate on a more universal definition.
- Some documents submitted were complaints from neighbors rather than a defined nuisance.
- There is an area of opportunity for the Training Hubs to establish a standardized definition to ensure alignment across municipalities.



2

COMPLETE DOCUMENTATION

Nuisance documentation was often informal and incomplete, which resulted in gaps in important information regarding follow-up actions and enforcement.

- Some possible explanations for this lack of documentation include no standard intake form, undefined follow-up procedures, uncertainty about what qualifies as a nuisance, and time constraints in addressing nuisances.
- There is the opportunity for the development of a standardized form that captures who is filing the nuisance complaint, a detailed description of the problem, why an inspection was necessary, results of the inspection, follow-up of any findings, and a proper closing of the complaint identifying all corrections observed.

Effective nuisance documentation necessitates standardized intake forms, a clear definition of what constitutes a nuisance, and differentiation between complaints and nuisances. A robust inspection report should address who, what, where, when, and why, emphasize compliance with due dates, note unaddressed issues, include signed complaints, and include essential field details.

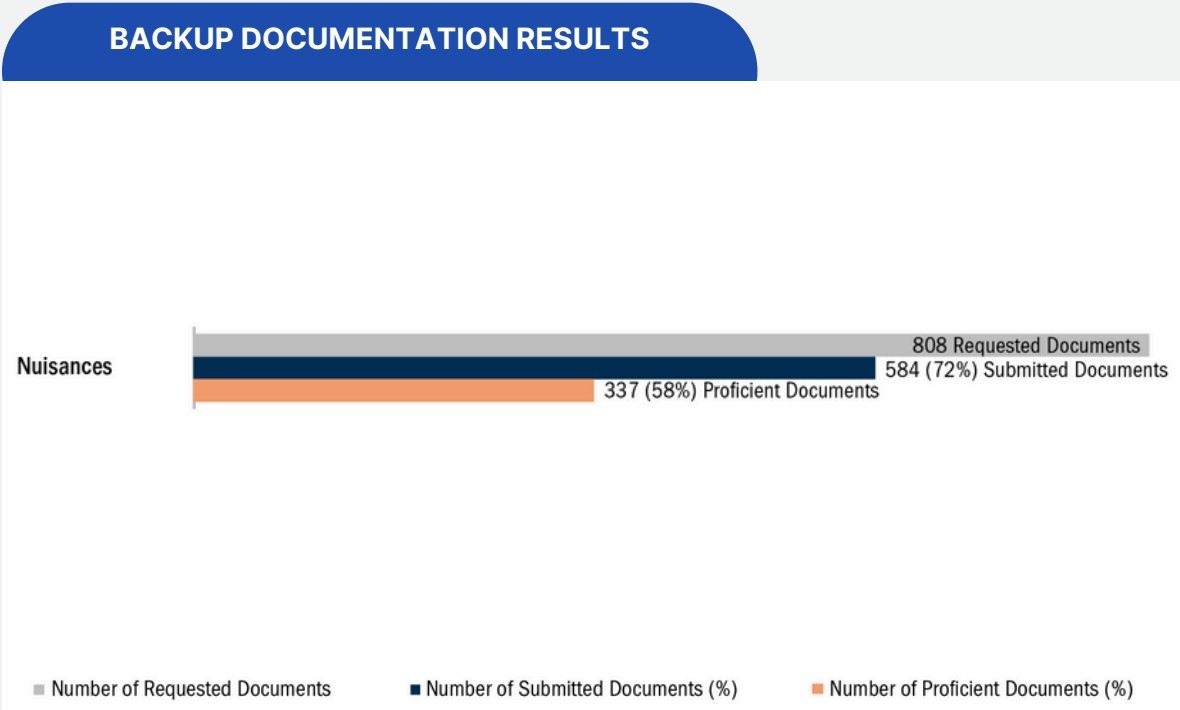


Nuisances

Qualitative Findings

The tables below outline the reasons why nuisance-related documentation 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 nuisance category. The most significant issue for nuisances overall was the absence of a follow-up action, or the follow-up action was not properly documented.



COMPLAINT #1/2/3/4/5 DOCUMENTS	
EVALUATION CRITERIA	
	Follow-up action not completed or documented
	Violations identified without documented follow-up action
	Reinspection not completed or documented
	Critical fields not completed
	Form insufficient or not approved
	Reinspection not completed or documented
	Unreasonable inspectional timeline based on the complaint