



# Environmental Health Services

● *Healthy Environments = Healthy People* ●

## DEHS Directors' Meeting: 02 November 2023

[Meeting recording available](#)

Next conference call 01 February 2024 1:00-2:00PM ET

**Alaska:** Hugh Denny

**Albuquerque:** *Not on call*

**Bemidji:** Tim Duffy

**Billings:** Darcy Merchant

**California:** Carolyn Garcia

**Great Plains:** *Not on call*

**Nashville:** Charles Woodlee

**Navajo:** Donna Gilbert

**Oklahoma:** *Not on call*

**Phoenix:** Dave Cramer

**Portland:** *Not on call*

**Tucson:** Julie Frazier

**Environmental Health Support Center:** Jeff Dickson; Braden Hickey

**DEHS HQ:** Matt Albright; Sam Frank; Brian Hroch; Molly Madson; Stephen Piontkowski; Mike Reed; Andrea Tsatoke

### 1. Welcome and Update (Mike Reed)

- a. Routine work ongoing (COERs, contracting, etc.)
- b. GS-13 DEHO position description
  - i. Cleared classification
  - ii. Finalized
  - iii. OF-8 signed
  - iv. Ready for use
  - v. Thanks to workgroup: Dave Cramer; Tim Duffy; Carolyn Garcia
- c. Data quality: several initiatives gaining momentum (e.g. establishment type definition refinements, auto-inactivate feature)

### 2. Area Highlights

- a. Alaska
  - i. General EH
    - [ANTHC Air & Healthy Homes Program](#)
      - One in Moose (subsistence food source)
      - Advocating for Vet services
  - ii. IP
    - TIPCAP sites (3) progressing nicely
    - Thanks to Molly and Andrea for support
- b. Albuquerque – *Not on call*

- c. Bemidji
  - i. Duluth Field Office: open and operational
    - Joe Sarisky, EHS, at that site
  - ii. Staffing
    - GS-12 EH Consultant position will be added; duty station in Duluth or Bemidji
  - iii. IP
    - Field course was in Duluth and Fond du Lac in October and went very well; future work in elder fall prevention promising
  - iv. General EH
    - Feast days are providing continuous work over the summer and fall
- d. Billings
  - i. Staffing
    - Area IP Specialist vacancy announcement forthcoming
    - Blackfeet SU EHO position vacant
    - Davis Reardon selected FTE in current duty station
  - ii. Eastern Shoshone Tribe (Windriver SU) planning to compact EH services effective April 2024
  - iii. General EH
    - Evaluation of tribes establishment inspections
    - Rabies Lay Vaccinator Program started in 2 locations
  - iv. IP
    - Preparing to host IP Course 1 with Oklahoma City Area in early CY24
    - Transitioning from a MOU with six tribes to a cooperative agreement
    - TIPCAP sites doing well and increasing fall prevention activities
- e. California
  - i. General EH
    - DEHS staff meeting in October focused on completing strategic plan
      - Developed last goal and vision statement
      - Plan finalized, distributed and initiated
    - FDA standardization: Alyssa Bernido at Phoenix Area, Eastern Arizona District Office working with CDR Snyder on FDA standardization; this is the first step toward one of our strategic plan objectives
    - Area staff partnering with OPH on program reviews of several tribal health programs



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- ii. Emergency Preparedness
  - Highland Fire blew escalated a few days ago in Riverside County
    - Grew from 10 acres to 1400+ acres in 5 hours
    - Precautionary evacuation of the Desert Sage Healing Center
    - Center reoccupied the following day as firefighters contained fire
    - Fire currently at 2487 acres and 25% contained with mandatory evacuation orders being downgraded
  - The Area held an ICS tabletop in July and has scheduled a COOP tabletop for August with an IT focused scenario to satisfy a mandate from HQ.
- iii. Institutional EH
  - Area staff partnering with HFE on providing technical assistance to Sacred Oaks Healing Center who is in the process of seeking accreditation by TJC
- f. Great Plains – *Not on call*
- g. Nashville
  - i. Staffing
    - OEHE Director retired 01 November 2023. CDR Weston Kenney, SFC Director, is Acting OEHE Director
  - ii. Gen EH
    - Continuing support for expansion of services to new tribes in Virginia
      - Two new health centers under construction
      - Initiated a discussion with Office of Tribal Affairs regarding service population for IP shares
  - iii. Emergency management
    - Area Director indicated she wants additional time and effort devoted to Emergency Management in FY24
  - iv. IP
    - Recently met Columbia Univ. Center for Safety and Injury Prevention; program helped tribes in the Western U.S. and they are seeking to do the same in eastern U.S.
  - v. Thanks to HQ and program for including the Title I retained and Title V buy-back services in the performance measure data
- h. Navajo
  - i. Staffing
    - Cross-training with tribal Sanitarians
    - Selected 3 EHS and hoping they are onboard soon
    - Recent challenges with folks being selected then leaving the job due to duty station location (i.e. rescinding applications after interviews or leaving job after reporting for a few weeks)



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## ii. IP

- Training and recruitment at Navajo College

## i. Oklahoma City – *Not on call*

## j. Phoenix

### i. Staffing

- GS-12 Sanitarian Consultants for Tempe and Show Low filled
- GS-12 Sanitarian Consultant for Reno vacancy announcement forthcoming
- DEHO, Reno, selected
- EHS vacancies in Tempe, Hopi, Ft. Duchesne and Reno

### ii. General EH

- Supai Clinic grand opening next week
  - Ms. Tso and the Governor of Arizona present at 08 November ribbon cutting
  - Clinic is 12,700 SF and replaces a 2,600 SF facility opened in 1972
  - All building materials slung down by helicopter
- Vince Garcia and Dave Cramer met with BIA/BIE representatives to coordinate surveys of facilities and resolve any jurisdictional conflicts
- DEHS held a quarterly education series EHS vs Pets, bed bugs, cockroaches

## iii. IP

- Phoenix Area IP is partnering with the AZ Trauma and 911 database managers to develop customized injury data reports by tribe; should help us better understand mechanisms of injury
- Phoenix Area IP is wrapping up evaluation of gun safe pilot project
  - The IP Team may partner with behavioral health to expand to a few more communities
  - Rob will submit presentation abstract to SAVIR (April 2024)
- Phoenix Area IP staff using National Digital Check Form at CPS check-up events
  - So far so good
  - Connectivity issues in remote locations are a barrier at times

## iv. Institutional EH

- John Hansen, Landon Wiggins and Frank Robinson helping set up the new clinic in Supai; supported Taquanta Feely, Safety Officer, with drills, training and hazard rounds
- John Hansen developed a Legionella Incident Response Guide to help Service Unit Incident Management teams rapidly address positive Legionella water tests
  - IRG shared at EHSC's safety officer educational series



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- k. Portland – *Not on call*
- l. Tucson
  - i. Staffing
    - Director DEHS vacancy announcement forthcoming
  - ii. EH
    - Catching-up on rabies vaccination clinics
  - iii. IP
    - Thai Chi instructor on staff
- m. EHSC (Jeff Dickson)
  - i. Social Drivers of Health (SDOH)
    - Calling this “Drivers of Health” instead of “Determinants of Health”
    - Thanks to Darcy for his collaboration on Community-based Participatory Research
    - See slides Jeff emailed Area DEHS Directors on 03 November
    - Several impending SDOH requirements for healthcare from various bodies (Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, The Joint Commission, Certified EHR technology)
    - Overview of SDOH and how EH is related
    - DEHS has potential role as conveners (i.e. facilitators) not crusaders similar to what we do in many issues
    - IHS 2024 SDOH initiatives
      - Health Related Social Needs
        - Approx 4 months long
        - Federal facilities only
        - Screening only
        - Evaluate IHS processes
        - January start
      - Community Collaborative (possible EH role)
        - Longer timeline
        - Federal facilities only
        - HRSN Screening + Community
        - Tribes determine priorities
        - March start
      - HHS Environmental Justice and Equity
        - Lead: IHS NEPA Coordinator
        - Similar scope
        - Parallel work
        - Collaboration opportunity with SDOH

### 3. HQ Announcements

- a. Injury prevention (Molly Madson)
  - i. Fellowship
    - Successful in-person field course was in Duluth and Fond du Lac in October
    - In-person symposium will be in May 2024 in Rockville
  - ii. Short courses
    - Course 3 [in-person pilot] in winter 2024 in Albuquerque
  - iii. IP Specialist annual meeting will be in May 2024 in Rockville
  - iv. TIPCAP
    - Project Officer funding
      - Each Area with a TIPCAP site will be able to receive up to \$5,000 reimbursable funding each year
      - Finalizing reimbursement process
    - Annual Workshop will be in May 2024 in Rockville
  - v. 2025 AI/AN National Conference on Injury and Violence Prevention planning ongoing
    - IHS planning team reps: Molly, Andrea, Connie and Kayla
- b. Institutional EH (Brian Hroch)
  - i. Appreciate Area DEHS Directors' support for everyone involved in these national initiatives
  - ii. IEH Workforce Development
    - IEH Residency
      - Applications due by 13 November 2023
    - Filed-based Residency
      - Workgroup: Cook, Conner, Hansen, Joplin, Peaches, Hroch
      - Developing competency assessment and methods to competency
  - iii. Professional development
    - EHSC courses
    - Safety Fundamentals
    - Accreditation course
  - iv. Safe Patient Handling and Mobility
    - Box, Hansen, Hiles, Hroch, Hubbard
    - HFAC/OEHE A/E Design Guide update
  - v. Office of Quality
    - Enterprise Risk Management (Facilities and EOC)
      - Conner, Franks, Hroch
      - EOC Dashboard development and pilot
  - vi. Quarterly IEHO call was on 31 October



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- vii. [IHM Part 1 – Chapter 9 – Occupational Safety And Health Program](#)
  - Calvert, Conner, Dickson, Franks, Hroch, Peaches, Wiggins, Williams, Woodlee
  - Rollout: materials developed; presenting to various groups
- c. Performance Measures FY23 (Matt Albright)
  - i. Environmental Surveillance
    - FY23 80.6%
    - FY22 81.45%
    - FY21 87.5%
    - FY20 86.7%
  - ii. Injury Prevention
    - FY23 599
    - FY22 484
    - FY21 473
    - FY20 154
- d. DEHS Awards (Stephen Piontkowski)
  - i. NEW for 2023 awardees – they will be invited to attend Annual DEHS Directors’ Meeting in Oklahoma City in April 2024 and placed on HQ
  - ii. [2023 Environmental Health Specialist of the Year](#); nominations due to [CAPT Stephen R. Piontkowski](#) by 08 January
  - iii. [2023 Gary J. Gefroh Health and Safety Award](#); nominations due to [Brian Hroch](#) by 09 February
  - iv. [2023 Rick Smith Injury Prevention Award](#); nominations due to [CDR Molly Madson](#) by 09 February
- e. WebEHRS (Sam Frank)
  - i. Establishment Type definition refinement
    - Background
      - Most of these revolve around language that doesn't properly differentiate between establishments of varying size, scope and complexity, as well as work-day factors that are not properly aligned with the establishment type or lacking descriptions of establishment characteristics that have contributed to a misalignment of facilities in WebEHRS
    - Methodology
      - Similar to what we did in 2019 when significant efforts made to update definitions
      - Consulted resources like the Model Aquatic Health Code, reviewing common establishment nomenclature used by several state and local health departments, etc.



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- Establishment Type 46.1 – Grocery/C-Store
  - Issue(s): current definition lacks specificity of what is and what is not a grocery/c-store; departments w/in grocery stores are not considered independent of parent facility (i.e. bakeries, meat markets, and delis); misaligned establishments; inflates representative work load for separate departments within grocery stores.
  - Proposed solution: tighten definition to better describe establishment characteristics and create new establishment type 46.2 Grocery-based Bakery, Meat Market, and Delicatessens.
  - Next steps
    - Provide summary of proposed changes to DEHS Directors
    - Request input/feedback by 27 NOV
    - Finalize changes during meeting on 29 NOV
- Establishment Type 55 – Aquatic Facilities
  - Issue(s): current definition does not account for establishments of varying size, scope and complexity; inflates representative work load for basic aquatic facilities.
  - Proposed solution: create 3 new establishment type(s) based on # of aquatic venues co-located on same property.
  - Next steps
    - Provide summary of proposed changes to DEHS Directors
    - Request input/feedback by 27 NOV
    - Finalize changes during meeting on 29 NOV
- f. DEHS Extern Program (Stephen Piontkowski)
  - i. [Website](#) updated
  - ii. Talking points & milestones shared
  - iii. Civil Service application window open Nov '23-Mar '24
  - iv. Selection & placement
    - 6 COSTEPs selected and placed in late Oct '23
    - Civil Service begins Nov '23





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g. Reminders (Stephen Piontkowski)

*See emails on all these sent to Area DEHS Directors over past month*

- i. 09 November – climate change survey
- ii. 29 December
  - Staffing report
  - Photos contest pics
- iii. 08 January
  - [2023 Environmental Health Specialist of the Year](#); nominations due to [CAPT Stephen R. Piontkowski](#)
- iv. 31 January
  - Project posters
  - Area DEHS program description
- v. 09 February
  - [2023 Gary J. Gefroh Health and Safety Award](#); nominations due to [Brian Hroch](#)
  - [2023 Rick Smith Injury Prevention Award](#); nominations due to [CDR Molly Madson](#)

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