

INDIAN HEALTH SERVICE
PORTLAND AREA
DIVISION OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES (DEHS)

Community Environmental Health Profiles

Problem Statement and Current Status

The Division of Environmental Health Services (DEHS) provides evidence-based public health interventions and measures to control and prevent environmentally-related disease and injury, and to reduce environmental risks and hazards where people live, learn, work, and play. Services and activities include technical surveys, training and certification classes, epidemiology and disease/injury case investigations, community assessment, emergency response, policy development, planning, and evaluation. However, the DEHS does not currently have the resources it requires to optimally deliver a comprehensive program. Utilizing the proxy workload measure of the national DEHS resource requirement methodology (RRM), the Portland Area DEHS is at approximately 25% of the level of need funded (LNF).

In order to maximize resources, the DEHS has undergone extensive management planning and identified priority core services and strategic initiatives through calendar year 2017. One of the essential services identified is to monitor environmental and health status to identify community environmental health problems.

This project will focus on providing community environmental health assessments and improvement plans to create an accurate and verifiable profile of the community's environmental health status. The process is designed to improve decision making by taking a collaborative community-based approach to generating an action plan. The plan is based on a set of priorities that reflect both an accurate assessment of local environmental health status and an understanding of public values and priorities.

Objectives and Methods

This project is to conduct community environmental health assessments, develop environmental health improvement plans, and publish "Community Environmental Health Profiles (CEHP)" for seven Tribes in the Portland Area. Tribes who retain direct services with the Portland Area Indian Health Service in western and eastern Washington and Idaho will be the primary beneficiaries of these services. Participating Tribes will be selected based on community readiness factors. The project resources will be used to hire a junior-level, temporary employee to carry-out the scope of work outlined below:

1. Serve as the coordinator and facilitator for the CEHP project.
2. Serve as advisor to the Tribes regarding the execution of the CEHPs.
3. Represent Portland Area as a member of the community Tribal Environmental Health Assessment Teams.
4. Confer with other IHS and Tribal environmental health staff as necessary.
5. Record and track progress of all meetings during the process.
6. Provide on-site training and technical assistance to the Assessment Teams as needed.

7. Compile information during the process and develop into an improvement plan approved by the Assessment Teams.
8. Provide written recommendations from the Assessment Team regarding use of the process by other Tribes. These recommendations should reflect any modification or elimination of protocol tasks.

The project outputs will include the following:

1. Published reports, including the assessment and improvement plan compiled into the CEHPs, for seven to-be-determined Tribal communities.
2. Portland Area DEHS policy and standard operating procedures for developing CEHPs.
3. A final summary report detailing activities, lessons learned, recommendations, and a financial summary.

The new resources will enable the program to conduct special initiatives because more frequent communications and additional staff will enable the program to leverage more partnerships, focus resources into sustainable program efforts, engage the Tribes in planning which will reduce the number of “emergencies” and mitigate a reactionary program style, and prioritize the work.

Expected Outcomes

- Decreased environmental risk factors which lead to improved population health.
- Maximization of resources to ensure the program has a systematic approach for the identification, plans, and interventions to address community public health issues.
- A professional program with high morale and motivated people. Staff have increased abilities to respond to changes and new developments, can apply innovative strategies, and provide quality products.
- Enhanced credibility with stakeholders, improved customer accessibility to health services and information, a better educated and aware customer base.
- Improved government public health infrastructure to deliver essential environmental public health services through increased number of public health policies, codes, and programs at the Tribal level.