DEHS Directors’ Meeting: 06/03/21
Meeting recording available upon request

Next conference call August 05, 2021 1:00-2:00PM ET

Alaska: Not on call
Albuquerque: Carrie Oyster
Bemidji: Not on call
Billings: Darcy Merchant
California: Carolyn Garcia
Great Plains: Chris Allen
Nashville: Kit Grosch
Navajo: Donna Gilbert
Oklahoma: Danny Walters
Phoenix: Dave Cramer
Portland: Not on call
Tucson: Not on call

Environmental Health Support Center: Not on call
Rockville: Kelly Taylor, Charles Woodlee, Molly Madson, Mike Reed, Stephen Piontkowski

1. Director’s Welcome and Update (Kelly Taylor)
   a. Thank you for joining today. We have an interesting topic we will discuss during the call today.
   b. FY2022 [President’s] proposed budget highlights
      i. Large increase for IHS – $2.2B (~36%)
      ii. DEHS funding within Facilities budget
      iii. Facilities & Environmental Health Support Account – $13M increase (majority of funds go to Facilities & SFC)
      iv. FY 2022 Congressional Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees
   c. Report from the desk of the Chief Environmental Health Officer
      i. Many USPHS Commissioned Corps policy changes. Officers and those who supervise them should be aware of them.
      ii. POM 821.76, Deployment Procedures
         • On call months
         • New deployment team concept
         • Dwell time allowed
      iii. 2022 Promotion Benchmarks for All Categories
         • Individual professional category benchmarks no longer apply
         • New combined category benchmarks effective for Promotion Year 2022
         • Review Precepts 2 & 3 (Education, Training & Professional Development; & Career Progression & Potential, respectively)
            • Contact RADM Taylor w questions, comments, concerns
d. Post COVID-19 life seems to be occurring (i.e. the new normal)
   i. ICSs are demobilizing
   ii. After action reports being written
   iii. COVID-19 activities being incorporated into routine work
   iv. DEHS will continue to be a community-based program & many of the COVID-19 activities were an extension of work we were already doing
   v. Communications among IHS leadership, tribes, & within programs have improved
   vi. Staff well-being taxed & stretched & what we’ll focus our conversation on today

2. COVID-19 DEHS White Paper – update & personnel wellbeing (Stephen Piontkowski)
   a. See slides presented after the Area Highlights & HQ Announcements portion of these minutes
   b. Resources
      i. Division of Behavioral Health presentation during 14MAY2021 COVID-19 Update for IHS Employees begins at 33rd minute
      ii. Employee Assistance Program
   c. Trainings
      i. Tele-Education for behavioral health trainings
      ii. Compassion Fatigue On-Demand Training
      iv. Grief and Loss Webinar Series: Supporting Providers Dealing with Loss Webinar Recording
   d. Articles for staff
      i. 6 Ways to Weave Self-Care Into Your Workday
      ii. Caring for Your Mental Health
   e. Articles for leaders
      i. Burnout is About Your Workplace, Not Your People

3. Area Highlights
   Insights/comments/discussion on the personnel wellbeing findings?
   What actions have you taken to ensure & support staff’s wellbeing?
   What actions may you need to take regarding your staff’s wellbeing?
   a. Alaska – Not on call
   b. Albuquerque
      i. Push-up challenge was a team builder & enhanced fitness; t-shirt forthcoming
      ii. Routine meetings/calls include a personal touch to learn more about one another (e.g. personality styles; 2 truths & a lie)
      iii. Granting 59 minutes of leave
   c. Bemidji – Not on call
d. Billings
   i. Appreciate the presentation & information
   ii. Consider a follow-up survey of staff post pandemic
   iii. Burnout & self-care discussed during quarterly calls
   iv. EAP available & check w resources from local HR office
   v. Will share more information & resources more often

e. California
   i. Glad survey asked the questions
   ii. Results were not surprising
   iii. Don’t wait until staff express concerns but anticipate them
   iv. Increased frequency of routine meetings/calls
   v. Box breathing
   vi. Shared EMPOC & ICS duties among staff; need to enhance those competencies among staff
   vii. Will continue to encourage staff to practice self-care
   viii. Be cognizant not to wear-out the high performers

f. Great Plains
   i. Appreciate sentiment on not wearing-out high performers; don’t load them up like a baked potato
   ii. Concerns the burnout & stress will accelerate employee’s retirement timelines
   iii. Maintain routine meetings/calls
   iv. Encourage use of leave & EAP
   v. Beginning to introduce routine EH work & move away from “response mode” operations tempo

g. Nashville
   i. Staff take care of one another
   ii. Maintain routine meetings/calls
   iii. Increase more face-to-face work when feasible

h. Navajo
   i. Impacted heavily from staff who were COVID+
   ii. Promote EAP
   iii. Navajo Area supports a walking program & fitness challenges

i. Oklahoma City
   i. Thought the numbers would have been higher than what the survey revealed
   ii. Strong emphasis on communication
   iii. Open door policy among staff
   iv. Provide staff coverage when needed
   v. Mental health services utilized
   vi. Maintain routine meetings/calls
j. Phoenix
   i. Appreciate the visual of *loading up high performers like a baked potato*, & agree it needs to be avoided
   ii. Information from the survey very insightful & useful
   iii. Maintain routine meetings/calls
   iv. Enhanced use of video calls
   v. Practiced empathy & flexibility
   vi. Supporting purposeful work
   vii. Ensured clear guidance to staff on how to conduct work safely

k. Portland – *Not on call*

l. Tucson – *Not on call*

m. EHSC – *Not on call*

4. HQ Announcements
   a. Injury prevention (Molly Madson)
      i. Introduction to IP pilot course went well
         • 24-28 May
         • 30 participants registered
      ii. TIPCAP
         • Annual Project Officer Mtg 08 June
         • Annual Workshop 09-10 June
      iii. IPS call 15 June – *the IPS call has been canceled since this announcement was made on 03 June 2021*

   b. IEH (Charles Woodlee)
      i. I-STAR
         • Governing body reporting dashboards nearing completion
         • Developing white paper recommending how facilities use system
      ii. ECOMP: BLS report due soon
         • IEH/SoS need to close cases – help supervisors
      iii. OSHA: Targeted inspection of healthcare facilities; may visit Area and OSHA offices since they’re in the neighborhood
      iv. Residency update
         • LCDR Brandon Parker defends thesis on 04 June
         • Presentation for DEHS staff week of 14 June
         • Transferring to Phoenix Area Office

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DEHS COVID-19 SURVEY
UPDATE & PERSONNEL WELLBEING

- Project Update
- Personnel Wellbeing

CAPSTONE SURVEY QUESTIONS

Demographic (Area, Job Title, Credentials, Years of Experience, etc.)
COVID-19 Activities
Routine Work
Needs, gaps, issues
Worker resources and protection
Communication
Burnout, stress, overwork
Telework
Successes & challenges

CAPSTONE METHODS

- Created Questionnaire
- Disseminated through Leadership
- Analysis

CAPSTONE RESULTS

3-WEEK OPEN PERIOD
62.7% RESPONSE RATE (N=79)
ABOUT 1/3 FROM EACH OFFICE TYPE

Burnout & Stress

- Feel emotionally exhausted
- Feel worn out at the end of the working day
- Feel that work is frustrating
- Feel burnt out because of work
- Feel exhausted in morning as the thought of another day of work
- Feel that every working hour is a drag
- Notice of the above
- Other

82% marked at least one of these symptoms

Burnout & Stress – Other

- Isolation
- Anxiety
- Underutilized
- So understaffed it’s impossible to get ahead
- Greatest challenge of my career
What could be done by management to better support district or field staff in the fulfillment of COVID-19 work?

- More support for families of field staff still conducting field work in person
- Fill vacancies
- Allow telework
- Listen
- Check-in
- This office did good, but clinic staff needed more support
- Management did a fine job
- IHS support staff & management are amazingly supportive

Successes
- Staff able to showcase adaptability, flexibility, resourcefulness
- Increased Teamwork
- Emphasis on Workforce safety
- Importance and value of environmental health

Challenges
- Lack of standardized guidance and clearly defined roles
- Communication with staff – staying “in-sync” with field staff and their work
- Lack of preparation for emergencies – COOP, training, resources, etc.

The Importance of Self-Care
- Self-care can help you manage stress, lower your risk of illness, and increase your energy
- Self-care looks different for everyone, it’s important to find what works for you

Keep it simple, practice daily

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Composition Fatigue</th>
<th>Vicarious Trauma (Secondary Trauma)</th>
<th>Burnout</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reduced empathy or liability to empathize</td>
<td>Similar symptoms of PTSD: intrusive experiencing of the traumatic material</td>
<td>Feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling overwhelmed, hopeless, hopeless, powerless</td>
<td>Avoidance of trauma triggers</td>
<td>Increased mental distance from one’s job</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exhaustion</td>
<td>Easily startled or on guard</td>
<td>Reduced ability to meet the needs or expectations of the job</td>
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<td>Dread of working with certain clients/patients</td>
<td>Negative changes in beliefs and feelings</td>
<td>Dispersonalization (feeling disconnected or detached from one’s body and thoughts)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physical symptoms (nausea, headaches, dizziness)</td>
<td>Physical complaints</td>
<td>Lack of feelings of personal accomplishment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sadness and Grief</td>
<td>Dissociation</td>
<td>Withdrawal, Negativity, Blaming others</td>
</tr>
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Tips for Stress Management

- Taking Care of You Daily
  - Eat healthy, regular meals and stay hydrated
  - Make sleep a priority
  - Get regular exercise
  - Try a relaxing activity (breathing exercise, meditation, muscle relaxation)
  - Engage in your cultural, spiritual, and religious beliefs and activities
  - Stay connected to people who provide you with emotional support
  - Avoid mood-altering substances

- Work-Specific Stress
  - Take breaks & use your leave to take care of yourself
  - Set goals & prioritize work tasks
  - Set healthy boundaries at work
  - Be mindful of what you have accomplished at the end of the day, celebrate your wins
  - Practice self-compassion
  - Cheerleading statements: “I’m doing the best I can with the resources I have.”
  - Show kindness & support for coworkers and team members
What Can the Organization & Leaders Do to Prevent Burnout?

- Provide clear, consistent communication and support
- Provide role clarity
- Reduce unreasonable time pressures to complete tasks
- Establish priorities, and deliverable, realistic work

Help Resources for Employees

The Federal Occupational Health (FOH) Employee Assistance Program (EAP) services are available for active federal employees and their immediate family. 866-4FOH-HLP (866-436-4457)

**The Employee Assistance Program**

Crisis Text Line (to connect with a crisis counselor):
- Text HOME to 741741
- Text NATIVE to 741741 (American Indian/Alaska Native)

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:
- 800-273-8255

Trainings

- [Tele-Education for behavioral health trainings](#)
- [Compassion Fatigue On-Demand Training](#)
- [Grief and Loss Webinar Series: Supporting Providers Dealing with Loss Webinar Recording](#)

Articles

- [For Staff](#)
- [For Leaders](#)

- 6 Ways to Weave Self-Care into Your Workday
- Caring for Your Mental Health
- Burnout Is About Your Workplace, Not Your People
- Organizational Evidence-Based and Promising Practices for Improving Clinician Well-Being