



Environmental Health Services

● *Healthy Environments = Healthy People* ●

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



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- 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](#)
 - iii. [IHS Covid-19 Response Webinar Series: Supporting the Mental Health of Healthcare Workers during Covid-19 Webinar Recording](#)
 - 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*



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- 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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Slides presented during COVID-19 DEHS White Paper – update & personnel wellbeing (Stephen Piontkowski)

DEHS COVID-19 SURVEY UPDATE & PERSONNEL WELLBEING


- Project Update
- Personnel Wellbeing



CAPT Stephen Piontkowski




LT Braden Hickey




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



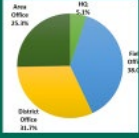
CAPSTONE RESULTS




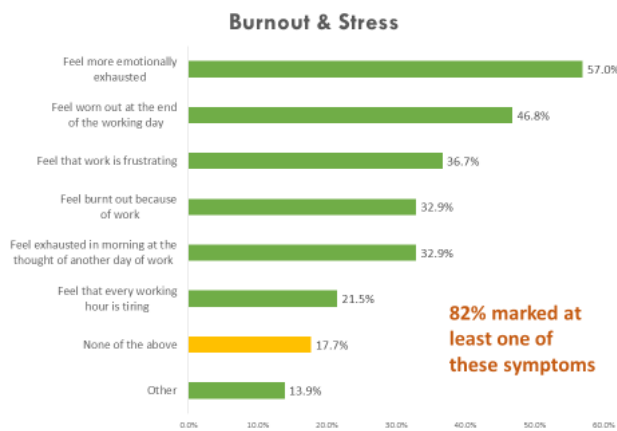
3-WEEK OPEN PERIOD



62.7% RESPONSE RATE (N=79)



ABOUT 1/3 FROM EACH OFFICE TYPE

Burnout & Stress – Other

Isolation

Anxiety

Loss

Sad

Underutilized

So understaffed its impossible to get ahead

Greatest challenge of my career



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What could be done by management to better support district or field staff in the fulfillment of COVID-19 work?

<p>More support for families of field staff still conducting field work in-person</p>	<p>Fill vacancies</p> <p>Allow telework</p> <p>Listen</p> <p>Check-in</p>	<p>This office did good, but clinic staff needed more support</p> <p>Management did a fine job</p>	<p>IHS support staff & management are amazingly supportive</p>
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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, its important to find what works for you

Keep it simple, practice daily

Signs & Symptoms

Compassion Fatigue	Vicarious Trauma (Secondary Trauma)	Burnout
Reduced empathy or inability to empathize	Similar to symptoms of PTSD. Intrusive experiencing of the traumatic material	Feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion
Feeling overwhelmed, hopeless, helpless, powerless	Avoidance of trauma triggers	Increased mental distance from one's job
Exhaustion	Easily startled or on guard	Reduced ability to meet the needs or expectations of the job
Dread of working with certain clients/patients	Negative changes in beliefs and feelings	Depersonalization (feeling disconnected or detached from one's body and thoughts)
Physical symptoms (nausea, headaches, dizziness)	Physical complaints	Lack of feelings of personal accomplishment
Sadness and Grief	Dissociation	Withdrawal, Negativity, Blaming others

Tips for Stress Management

Taking Care of You Daily	Work Specific Stress
Eat healthy, regular meals and stay hydrated	Take breaks & use your leave to take care of yourself
Make sleep a priority	Set goals & prioritize work tasks
Get regular exercise	Set healthy boundaries at work
Try a relaxing activity (breathing exercise, meditation, muscle relaxation)	Be mindful of what you have accomplished at the end of the day, celebrate your wins
Engage in your cultural, spiritual, and religious beliefs and activities	Practice self-compassion
Stay connected to people who provide you with emotional support	Cheerleading statements: "I'm doing the best I can with the resources I have."
Avoid mood-altering substances	Show kindness & support for coworkers and team members



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What Can the Organization & Leaders Do to Prevent Burnout?

Provide clear, consistent communication and support	Provide role clarity	Reduce unmanageable workload	Remove unreasonable time pressure to complete tasks	Establish priorities, and celebrate team wins
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Trainings

- [Tele-Education for behavioral health trainings](#)
- [Compassion Fatigue On-Demand Training](#)
- [IHS Covid-19 Response Webinar Series: Supporting the Mental Health of Healthcare Workers during Covid-19 Webinar Recording](#)
- [Grief and Loss Webinar Series: Supporting Providers Dealing with Loss Webinar Recording](#)

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

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