



Environmental Health Services

● *Healthy Environments = Healthy People* ●

DEHS Directors' Meeting: 01 August 2024

[Meeting recording available](#)

Next conference call 07 November 2024 1:00-2:00PM ET

<u>Area</u>	<u>Representative</u>	<u>Area</u>	<u>Representative</u>
Alaska:	<i>Not on call</i>	Nashville:	Charles Woodlee
Albuquerque:	Carrie Oyster	Navajo:	Donna Gilbert
Bemidji:	Tim Duffy	Oklahoma:	Danny Walters
Billings:	Darcy Merchant	Phoenix:	Dave Cramer
California:	Carolyn Garcia	Portland:	Chris Fish
Great Plains:	<i>Not on call</i>	Tucson:	Travis Bowser

Environmental Health Support Center: Braden Hickey; Jeff Dickson

DEHS HQ: Matt Albright; Brian Hroch; Stephen Piontkowski; Andrea Tsatoke

1. Welcome and Update (Matt Albright)

- a. Appreciate everyone's hard work, especially during this busy time of year
- b. [Veterinary Services to Improve Public Health in Rural Communities Act](#)
 - i. Proposal of Act has drawn attention
 - ii. DEHS HQ tracking the issue & determining any implications to DEHS
 - iii. Ensure we are engaged in services as prescribed in Chapter 11 & not posting unauthorized work on social media
- c. Position description updates needed to enhance career ladder within DEHS
 - i. GS-11/12 [senior field] EH Consultant, GS-13 DEHO, GS-14 Area DEHS Director, Area IEHOs, Area IP Specialists
 - ii. Standardized PD workgroup forthcoming; notify CAPT Reed if interested in being on workgroup
 - iii. Discussion re: use of 601 vs. 688 series
 - iv. Discussion re: billet standardization

2. Area Highlights

Focus question

How many staff do you know about that are interested in leaving IHS for other agencies? Reasons they may leave? What can be done to prevent/reverse their leaving?

- a. Alaska – *Not on call*

b. Albuquerque

i. How many staff do you know about that are interested in leaving IHS for other agencies?

- Reasons they may leave? No Commissioned Officers promoted to O-6 since 2019 (why are there mission priority buckets if they're not used or carry weight?); IHS leadership does not encourage moral or community (lack of camera use during calls); IHS doesn't understand the staff; HR challenges & delays; civilian staff view Officers as receiving better treatment; Officers don't feel supported to receive training; impenetrable Area DEHS "empires" that do not allow new staff to enter a program (i.e. "good ol' boys club"); do we know our staff & do they know we know them?

c. Bemidji

i. How many staff do you know about that are interested in leaving IHS for other agencies? 1 (Officer transferring to another agency, pursuing higher billet, new challenges & career progression)

- What can be done to prevent/reverse their leaving? Provide a good work culture with a work-life balance; opportunity for professional growth through work assignments, training & advanced education; awards & recognition; on the spot financial awards & retention incentives; billet should accurately reflect duties & responsibilities & competitive with other agencies; annual DEHS workshops are a good social team building opportunity; human resources moves exceptionally slow & seems to be working through their systems & hopefully we will see improved efficiencies; this a huge set back from the HR system from what we had one year ago

d. Billings

i. How many staff do you know about that are interested in leaving IHS for other agencies? None at this time

- What can be done to prevent/reverse their leaving? Hire locally when possible

ii. LCDR Merchant completed Ph.D course work & working on dissertation (traffic safety law)

iii. Staffing

- Fully staffed!!!
- One new hire has special interest in climate change & it was added to his PMAP

iv. Eastern Shooshone Tribe is now Title V as of 01 July 2024

- Davis Reardon therefore a tribal EHS



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- v. EH
 - Two tribes pursuing lay vaccinator program
 - Three tribes proposed tribal resolutions for lay vaccinator program
- vi. IP
 - Elder fall prevention work ongoing
- e. California
 - i. How many staff do you know about that are interested in leaving IHS for other agencies? Two staff have left DEHS & we are in the process of having our PDs converted & classified from 688 to 601 series
 - Reasons they may leave? More telework & remote work
 - What can be done to prevent/reverse their leaving? Offer more telework & remote work as positions' duties allow; currently at 3 days/week, alternate & compressed work schedules; SFC & DEHS have expressed they are losing candidates to remote work opportunities with other agencies
 - ii. Staffing
 - Two vacancies; announcements forthcoming
 - iii. IP
 - Partnering with OKC Area to host IP Course 1 in November; instructor team preparing
 - iv. Emergency Preparedness
 - Shelly Fire near miss with 1 community (Quartz Valley) & Park Fire presenting air quality issues to several tribal communities; we have distributed the remaining 20 air purifiers from our Area cache
- f. Great Plains – *Not on call*
- g. Nashville
 - i. How many staff do you know about that are interested in leaving IHS for other agencies? None
 - What can be done to prevent/reverse their leaving? Ensure billets align with workload & responsibilities; enhance work-life balance; support telework
- h. Navajo
 - i. Staffing
 - CAPT G. Tsatoke retired; CDR Gilbert, Acting DEHS Director, Navajo Area
 - Area IP Specialist vacant; announcement forthcoming
 - Eight vacancies
 - HR challenges ongoing
 - ii. EH
 - Hantavirus response
 - Fair season
 - ServeSafe training



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- iii. Area DEHS Workshop went well
- i. Oklahoma City
 - i. Staffing
 - Should be fully staffed in a few weeks!!!
 - Davis Reardon to report to Shawnee Service Unit
 - Kasie Holland to report to Pawnee Field Service Unit
 - ii. IEH
 - Eagle Horizon exercise complete: went extremely well & noted areas for improvement
- j. Phoenix
 - i. How many staff do you know about that are interested in leaving IHS for other agencies? Past couple years we've had 8 folks leave; couple folks had been with us a short amount of time
 - Reasons they may leave? Promotion anxiety; seeking a remote work assignment; want to do something new; move closer to family
 - What can be done to prevent/reverse their leaving? Update IHS training policy to allow Areas to implement Continued Service Agreements requiring a 2-year payback effective upon completion of Area-funded grad school; change Commissioned Corps policy allowing officers to count civil service time as part of their 2-year PHS commitment; if we sponsor the commissioning of an employee, it seems like they should stay with us 2-years after commissioning
 - ii. Staffing
 - LTJG Devin Temple (pathways hire) graduated from OBC in July
 - Selected a recent graduate (pathways) for San Carlos
 - Selected two GS-11 EHS for Reno; one from DOD & the other Southern Nevada Health District
 - Selected one GS-7 EHS for Ft Yuma; she's currently completing an internship at Bristol Bay Health Corp
 - Interviewing GS-7/9/11 EH Specialists for Ft. Duchesne, Hopi & Tempe
 - Vacancy announcement GS-12 Sanitarian Consultant for Reno & one for Tempe closes soon
 - Marty Stephens, District IP Coordinator, Reno District Office, transferring to EPA; vacancy announcement forthcoming
 - iii. National Public Health Council
 - Shout out to Stephen & Chris for presenting on DEHS Climate Change work



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iv. EH

- Norovirus Outbreak in Havasupai got a lot of media attention
- PHX facilitated a \$295,971 award from the DEF to support a cancer study at a NV Tribe
- EADO helped WMAT with a \$230K CDC RMSF Grant; funds help support tribal animal control
- Extern & COSTEP are going strong

v. IP

- IP team helped teach IVP Course 1 in Scottsdale this week
- Sherry Mitchell completed her IP Fellowship Bus Stop safety project
- Phoenix Area Behavioral Health purchased 100 firearm storage cabinets for AZ & NV tribes
- IP team partnering with University of Nevada, Reno on medication lock boxes for a Nevada tribe

vi. IEH

- Conducted occupational exposure monitoring to chlorine & ammonia at a tribal water treatment plant
- Frank Robinson, AEM, working with the VHA leveraging a MOA to TDY VHA clinicians to IHS sites
- IEH helping with ISC Security on WR Hospital & PIMC replacement projects

k. Portland

- i. How many staff do you know about that are interested in leaving IHS for other agencies?
 - Reasons they may leave? Low promotion rates among Commission Officers (why are there mission priority buckets if they're not used or carry weight?); challenges to support officership activities with size & scope of DEHS workload
 - What can be done to prevent/reverse their leaving? Awards & recognition

l. Tucson

- i. How many staff do you know about that are interested in leaving IHS for other agencies?
 - What can be done to prevent/reverse their leaving? Awards & recognition; TUC Area IHS hosts two employee appreciation days per year; utilize requirement & retention incentives; more telework & remote work
- ii. Staffing
 - LCDR Valeria Wyatt, Director DEHS, reported in July

- m. EHSC (Braden Hickey)
 - i. How many staff do you know about that are interested in leaving IHS for other agencies?
 - What can be done to prevent/reverse their leaving? Hire for talent who believe in the IHS mission; managers need to value staff as people
 - ii. On-line FHT
 - Workgroup completed first round of drafts
 - iii. REHS study tool ongoing
 - Target launch before OEHE Orientation course in 2025
 - iv. FY25 training course request forthcoming via email from Braden

3. HQ Announcements

- a. Injury prevention (Andrea Tsatoke)
 - i. Training
 - Injury & Violence Prevention (IVP) Course 1 – Scottsdale, AZ, 30 July – 01 August
 - IVP Course 2 – Minneapolis, MN, 10-12 September
 - IVP Course 3 – Virtual Fall 2024
 - IVP Course 1 – Virtual Fall 2024
 - ii. Fellowship
 - Symposium presentations available on [EHSC website](#)
 - iii. Thanks for everyone's help with the bog bite data request
 - iv. TIPCAP
 - Annual Workshop week of 19 May 2024 in Rockville
 - Non-competing continuation applications due 02 September
 - Congrats to UCD team for Safe States Advancing Health Equity Award!
- b. Institutional EH (Brian Hroch)
 - i. Annual meeting
 - 05-06 August, Denver
 - Objectives: Program Planning (assess, prioritize, select); update, collaborate, network
 - Precedes American Society of Safety Professionals Conference
 - ii. IEH Workforce Development
 - USUHS IEH Residency
 - Field-based Residency
 - Workgroup: Cook, Conner, Hansen, Joplin, Peaches, Hroch
 - Competency assessment & methods to competency
 - Piloting w one employee in Albuquerque Area



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- iii. Professional development
 - EHSC courses
 - SOFR Office Hours held monthly
 - Safety Fundamentals course
 - Great Plains Area, September 2024
 - Alaska Area, October 2024
- iv. [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
- v. EC/LS Workgroup
 - 16 recommendations
 - Presented to
 - OEHE Directors, Sacramento, June 2024 (Reed & Hroch)
 - IHS Executive Leadership Team, Nashville, June 2024 (Franks)
- vi. Office of Quality
 - Enterprise Risk Management (Facilities & EOC)
 - Conner, Franks, Hroch
 - EOC Dashboard development & pilot
- vii. IH Protocols
 - Hroch, Murga
- viii. Safe Patient Handling & Mobility
 - Hansen, Hiles, Hroch
 - HFAC/OEHE A/E Design Guide update
- ix. Quarterly IEHO call September 2024
- c. WebEHRS (Stephen Piontkowski)
 - i. Webinar
 - 16 May 2024
 - 25 participants
 - Well received
 - ii. WebEHRS 101 course
 - 30 July-01 August 2024
 - 14 registered; 08 participated [all tribal staff, IHS staff who registered did not attend]
 - iii. Service type feature update
 - Identifying system impacts & changes to improve data accuracy by service type – coming soon
 - iv. Mobile²
 - Activities feature in development

- v. Change Control Board
 - Current Board has been operating for one year
 - Resolved 47 feedback items
 - 9 approved; 6 with contract modifications
 - 6 not approved
 - 32 resolved with no change or found to be working correctly
- vi. Update on Establishment Types 42, 46.1, 46.2
 - Please ensure your establishments meet the current definitions for types: 42 Food Manufacturing, 46.1 Grocery/Convenience Stores & 46.2 Grocery-based Bakery, Meat Department, & Delis
 - Current misalignments for Type 42s
 - Total Misaligned Establishments 101/157 (64%)
 - Misaligned Grocery-based Meat Departments & Bakeries 63/157 (40%)
 - Misaligned other Bakeries & Establishment Types 38/157 (24%)
 - Current number of Type 46.2s in WebEHRS: 28 establishments added since March 2024
- d. DEHS Climate Change Workgroup (Stephen Piontkowski)
 - i. Record of Decision completed & distributed
 - ii. Climate for Health Ambassador Training WebEHRS instructions distributed
 - 12 staff entered training received (mostly from Oklahoma City Area)
 - iii. Infographic
 - Please use the [DEHS & Climate Change infographic](#) when communicating our Division's current approach to climate change.
 - DEHS identified the need for a public facing document summarizing the eight climate change recommendations we adopted at our annual meeting in Oklahoma City (April 2024)
 - All content taken from the summary report (April 2024) & recommendations we unanimously adopted
 - Purpose of document is for DEHS to use when communicating our climate change roles
 - Target audience: public; DEHS staff; tribal/IHS leadership; OEHE leadership; potential climate change partners; other EH programs; etc.
- iv. Presented DEHS work to IHS National Public Health Council in July 2024
- v. Several next steps to layout way forward
 - Update charter & work plan
 - Routine calls ongoing



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- e. Miscellaneous (Stephen Piontkowski)
 - i. COSTEP & [Civil Service] EH Externs
 - 8 total (5 COSTEPs, 3 civil service)
 - Virtual Symposium 26 July 2024
 - Narratives due at end of tour
 - 2025 wish list (see email from Stephen)
 - 2025 COSTEP application window open 01AUG-30SEPT2024
 - 2025 Civil Service Extern vacancy announcement 01NOV2024-28MAR2025
 - ii. RRM Freeze: October 2024
 - iii. Performance measures
 - iv. Take great pics
 - DEHS photo contest
 - EHOs in Action Photo Book

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