



Environmental Health Services

● *Healthy Environments = Healthy People* ●

DEHS Directors' Meeting: 08/05/21

Meeting recording available upon [request](#)

Next conference call October 07, 2021 1:00-2:00PM ET

Alaska:	<i>Not on call</i>	Nashville:	Kit Grosch
Albuquerque:	Carrie Oyster	Navajo:	Donna Gilbert
Bemidji:	Tim Duffy	Oklahoma:	<i>Not on call</i>
Billings:	Jordan Vandjelovic	Phoenix:	<i>Not on call</i>
California:	Carolyn Garcia	Portland:	Chris Fish
Great Plains:	<i>Not on call</i>	Tucson:	Travis Bowser

Environmental Health Support Center: Jeff Dickson

Rockville: Kelly Taylor, Charles Woodlee, Holly Billie, Mike Reed, Stephen Piontkowski

1. Director's Welcome and Update (Kelly Taylor)

- a. Today's Area highlights has a focused question related to COVID-19
 - i. Please include other pertinent updates related to your programs
- b. COVID-19 – FY2022 Proposed budget – House Report for IHS
 - i. IHS asked to report things related to the pandemic (e.g. ongoing challenges and weaknesses likely to exist beyond conclusion of the pandemic)
 - ii. Please start thinking about those as they apply to your program. For instance, what comes to mind for me include the following weaknesses:
 - IHS Indian Health Manual Chapter 9 – *outdated*
 - Revised Chapter 9 complete and has been awaiting approvals for extended period
 - Lack of official emergency preparedness program in IHS
 - Need for agency focus and funding for a more formal program (e.g. full-time EMPOCs and national program managers [no collateral duties]) that report directly to the Area or Agency Directors
 - Need for Employee Health Program
 - Lack of nationally-led initiative, too varied from Area to Area
- c. American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 ([ARPA](#))
 - i. IHS Facilities = \$600M for COVID-19-related needs for leasing, purchasing, construction, alteration, renovating, or equipping of health facilities and maintenance and improvement projects
 - Of the \$600M, \$29M went to Facilities and Environmental Health Support Account and ~\$9M of the \$29M was specifically for EHSA. EHS and SFC share the EHSA so it may look like we should get a proportional share of that \$9M but that is not completely accurate.



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- ii. In addition to the \$600M, \$10M is specifically for the delivery of potable water
 - This increases SFC's workload so much, that they feel like they should get the bulk of the ~\$9M so they can spend that \$10M on projects
 - It's hard to argue with that, but **if DEHS has a need related to COVID activities, you should work with your Area OEHE Director** to see if DEHS can use some of those funds to complete that work

2. Area Highlights

Has your work shifted at all in light of the current rise in cases/variants & the latest CDC guidance for fully vaccinated people & the President's new actions to increase vaccinations?

- a. Alaska – *Not on call*
- b. Albuquerque
 - i. *Has your work shifted at all...?*
 - Head Start Summit 2021 was virtual
 - Used EHSC platform to register participants & for pre/post test: worked very well; many folks from outside AQ Area
 - Posted recording on YouTube & will administer pre/post test to those who viewed the recording
 - Conducting trainings virtually will continue & may be more frequent than pre-pandemic
 - Will continue to use EHSC to register training attendees & to conduct pre/post tests
 - ii. [Safe and Proper Use of Disinfectants to Reduce Viral Surface Contamination in Correctional Facilities](#), NIOSH, 2021
- c. Bemidji
 - i. *Has your work shifted at all...?*
 - On the verge of a shift: BE Area standing-up ICS with a current focus on attestation plan; OEHE not involved yet, but providing consultation & ensuring DEHS staff conducting work that aligns with their skill set (e.g. not conducting swab tests)
 - Update planning & response plans as needed
 - Sense of disappointment that all the work completed so far has not prevented the potential next wave of cases
 - There was an upswing of traditional (non-COVID-19) EH-related work conducted this summer



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- ii. Office space updates
 - Mt. Pleasant, MI: conducting interviews next week for positions in this new office
 - Duluth, MN: new office should be open in about one year
 - Grand Rapids, MI: discussions of long-term plans to shift Area resources to this location to better serve tribes in MI
- iii. Staffing
 - Rhinelander, WI: District EHO vacancy announcement should be posted next week
- d. Billings
 - i. *Has your work shifted at all...?*
 - Not as of yet, but may change in near future
- e. California
 - i. *Has your work shifted at all...?*
 - Not really, EMPOC duties ongoing but there has been a recent increase in attaining testing supplies
 - Update planning & response plans as needed; not really a new duty as this has been done routinely throughout pandemic
 - ii. Dixie fire impacted Dixie Rancheria; town evacuated so no loss of life but structures destroyed
 - iii. Staffing
 - Ukiah Field Sanitarian vacancy re-announced after selectee declined offer
- f. Great Plains – *Not on call* (updates submitted via email)
 - i. *Has your work shifted at all...?*
 - The GPA (outside of IHS & Tribes) is seeing a steady increase in cases; anticipate we will see a lot more COVID-19 cases in the unvaccinated once schools reopen
 - IEH working on restart of IC at HQ
 - DEHS & IEH staff working on Burn Rate Calculations, Ordering Supplies, etc.
 - We were so close to actually getting a survey schedule established too
 - ii. Traditional (non-COVID-19) EH-related work
 - Pow Wow survey work
 - Consultation with schools prior to reopening
 - School & Head Start survey work
 - Some late summer food safety survey work
 - Casino/Hotel survey work
 - Healthy homes survey work
 - Justin Bunn finished his radon study in the Lake Andes area (Yankton Sioux Community); overall no significant issues identified
 - iii. IEH working on accreditation
 - iv. IP



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- Working with the two TIPCAP sites & we hope the Winnebago site did get their report submitted
 - 2020 Occupant Restraint Report completed
 - Working with several sites on conducting Severe Injury Surveillance System (SISS)
- g. Nashville
- i. *Has your work shifted at all...?*
 - Site visit to tribe to survey Head Start canceled at tribe's request due to increase of COVID-19 cases
 - Two staff families have COVID+ cases which hasn't happened in many months
 - Area Office is trying to increase vaccination rates (e.g. incentives)
 - OEHE to manage the "impact assessment form" for the Area
 - Area ICS may be re-instated
- h. Navajo
- i. *Has your work shifted at all...?*
 - Slight change focused on ICS becoming fully or partially operational
 - One OEHE office may be used as vaccination clinic site
 - ii. Staffing
 - The two GS-7/9 non-supervisory Sanitarian positions in Gallup & Shiprock were re-advertised & recently closed
- i. Oklahoma City – *Not on call*
- j. Phoenix – *Not on call*
- k. Portland
- i. *Has your work shifted at all...?*
 - Area ICS never completely demobilized, but weekly meetings are now occurring
 - Responding to questions related to the latest CDC guidance
 - OSHA Temporary Standard training for all staff
 - ii. Responding to wildfire issues as needed
- l. Tucson
- i. *Has your work shifted at all...?*
 - TU Area ICS remained active
 - Travis continues to serve as EMPOC, Safety Officer, Vaccine POC
 - Tribes began to reopen services a few months ago but now moving into more COVID-related work
 - ii. New DEHS staff to report in December 2021

m. EHSC

- i. *Has your work shifted at all...?*
 - Many staff have been involved with Area ICS & after scaling back this summer, ICS activity has increased the past three weeks
- ii. Using the EHSC platform for the AQ Area Head Start Summit 2021 was a great pilot & collaboration
 - EHSC looks forward to utilizing the tool with other Area programs; especially course registration feature for large regional or annual events
- iii. Introduction to IP pilot courses in June & in late August 2021
 - Great deal of interest to attend from across the Areas; had to place people on waiting lists
- iv. LPD Program
 - Next Leading Others cohort session 23-27 August
 - LPD Board developing a survey for OEHE managers to understand what their knowledge & awareness is of the LPD Program

3. HQ Announcements

- a. Injury prevention (Holly Billie)
 - i. Introduction to IP pilot course – second offering
 - 23-27 August
 - Course is full
- b. IEH (Charles Woodlee)
 - i. I-STAR: Env. of Care Dashboards
 - Out for IEH review through next week
 - Final release expected in next three weeks
 - ii. ECOMP: BLS report due soon
 - IEH/SOs need to close cases – help supervisors
 - OSHA Record-keepers need to recertify this month. Contact HQ if need certification approval
 - iii. Employee Health Program
 - Office of Quality has started work on a policy
 - EHO/IEHO roles should be very limited in support of clinical staff administering an employee health program
 - BE Area has had to consistently advocate that DEHS staff not get involved with healthcare related work they should not be doing



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4. Other

- a. COSTEP/Extern Symposium (Stephen Piontkowski)
 - i. Thanks for supporting the students
 - ii. Symposium was a success: 2, 2-hr sessions complete; 99 attendees total [both days combined]; 15 EHOs/ENGs stationed in 8 Areas presented their summer projects, accomplishments, activities, and overall experience
- b. [NEHA-FDA National Retail Food Regulatory Program](#) (Mike Reed)
 - i. Multi-agency initiative to advance conformance with the Voluntary National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards
 - ii. More info to DEHS Listserv & Area DEHS Directors forthcoming
- c. ARPA question – if the EHSA is receiving an additional ~\$9M how will there be equitable distribution of the EHSA funds that get split between SFC & DEHS?
 - i. The additional \$9M in ARPA funds will be distributed to the Areas proportionately and should not impact what DEHS already receives in EHSA funds (i.e. there should not be a need for SFC to tap into funds EHS and SFC already receive). SFC's additional needs should be covered by the bulk of the funds each Area gets out of the \$9M coming to them as ARPA funds. Received and processing for payment.

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