

DEHS Directors' Meeting: 06 August 2026

[Meeting recording available](#)

Next conference call 05 November 2026 1:00-2:30PM ET

<u>Area</u>	<u>Representative</u>	<u>Area</u>	<u>Representative</u>
Alaska:	<i>Not on call</i>	Navajo:	Helena Shannon & Brian Johnson
Albuquerque:	<i>Not on call</i>	Oklahoma:	Danny Walters
Bemidji:	<i>Not on call</i>	Phoenix:	Dave Cramer
Billings:	<i>Not on call</i>	Portland:	<i>Not on call</i>
California:	Carolyn Garcia	Tucson:	Valeria Wyatt
Great Plains:	<i>Not on call</i>		
Nashville:	<i>Not on call</i>		
Environmental Health Support Center: <i>Not on call</i>			
DEHS HQ: Sam Frank; Molly Madson; Stephen Piontkowski; Andrea Tsatoke			

1. Welcome and Update (Stephen Piontkowski)

- a. IHS Organizational Realignment
 - i. Proposal submitted to HHS
 - ii. Keep eye out for agency communications (e.g. emails, town halls)
- b. Force Management
 - i. Led by DCPS
 - ii. When USPHS applicants boarded but need to secure position, IHS & BOP can place them into a vacancy
 - iii. DEHS placed 2 candidates
 - iv. Unsure how many EHOs in the pipeline
- c. Area Consults
 - i. Conducted Great Plains Area DEHS Consult
 - In-person meeting July 2026
 - ii. California Area in-person meeting November 2026
 - iii. More to be scheduled into FY27

2. Area Highlights

- a. Alaska – *Not on call*
- b. Albuquerque – *submitted via email*
 - i. Staffing
 - CDR Parris retired this summer
 - ii. Challenge
 - Staffing shortages while balancing operational demands and developing FY2027 goals and objectives
 - iii. IP
 - Participated in a Quick-Build crosswalk project with one of our northern Pueblos and America Walks by providing pedestrian safety education, hands-on activities, and assisting with painting the new crosswalks

- iv. Head Start Summit
 - Held first in-person Head Start Summit in seven years
 - Nearly 200 attendees over two days
 - Great success and would not have been possible without the hard work and dedication of DEHS team
- v. Area OEHE Workshop
 - Planning ongoing
 - Week of October 26
 - DEHS will focus on process improvements, collaboration, and partnering with ASPR on environmental health disaster recovery
 - Please share suggestions for workshop topics
- vi. Progress 3 Reviews
 - Adjusting timelines to accommodate the fiscal year change, which has been challenging due to Feast Day coverage and increased workload
- c. Bemidji – *Not on call*
- d. Billings – *Not on call*
- e. California
 - i. Wildfire response
 - 10 wildfires since 08 July
 - 2 near reservations
 - 22 air purifiers, 7,000 N95s distributed to 5 tribal health programs
 - Cache depleting & requested more from NSSC
 - Served on panel at tribal wildfire seminar hosted by FEMA Region IX
 - Common issue identified that public health impact of wildfires frequently overlooked
 - Establishing and nurturing partnerships vital
 - ii. Extreme heat presentations
 - 2 sessions complete, 1 with OPH Office Hours forthcoming
 - 50+ participants
 - Pit River Tribe adopted [CA Area Extreme Heat Toolkit for Tribes](#)
- f. Great Plains – *Not on call*
- g. Nashville – *Not on call*
- h. Navajo
 - i. Staffing
 - CDR Shannon transferring to Director, SFC, Navajo Area in September 2026
 - Staffing challenges
 - ii. Vacancy announcements forthcoming
 - Area DEHS Director
 - Area DEHS Deputy Director

- iii. IP
 - Host IP Symposium in FY27
- iv. Several staff attended LPD training in July
- i. Oklahoma City
 - i. Staffing
 - Hayden Hamilton selected for field vacancy
 - RDMs Watts and Woiitte retired
 - Harold Cully retiring; CAPT Joe Jones, Acting Director, OEHE, Oklahoma City Area effective 01 September
 - ii. Four tribal program buy-backs
 - No longer supporting as of 01 July
 - Provided 1-year advance notice to the programs
 - This allows DEHS staff to maintain focus on the core mission and preserve intended scope of services (i.e., prevents mission creep)
- j. Phoenix
 - i.
 - ii. Staffing
 - 1 CO deployed to Kenya for Ebola response
 - Kate Pink reports next week as District EHO, Eastern Arizona District Office
 - Jared Ellsworth reports to Whiteriver Service Unit
 - CAD forthcoming
 - iii. EH
 - USPHS Veterinarian work rabies vaccination clinic in Elko
 - Good relationship with USPHS Veterinarian category to provide services
 - USPHS EHO served two weeks to earn practice hours & provided needed direct services in Reno District
 - Worked very well
 - Travel costs ~ \$7K
 - Focused effort to catch-up on survey work at Whiteriver Service Unit
 - 7 Civil Service & 2 COs completed TDYs
 - Submitted award nomination for the group
 - Whiteriver Service Unit Water Lab
 - Transitioned away from providing services at the lab so the tribe has full responsibility
 - Focused effort on completing water/wastewater surveys
 - iv. IP
 - CPS Tech course this month
 - Injury Prevention Course 1 this month alongside CA Area
 - Data sharing agreement with Utah Department of Health ongoing

- v. IEH
 - Staff at ASHE conference this week
 - Program planning meeting forthcoming
- k. Portland – *Not on call*
- l. Tucson
 - i. EH
 - Food safety consults to casino that opens in November
 - Head Chef is CFPM & interested in becoming a proctor; DEHS can assist as proctor
 - Food Handler Training ongoing
 - Rabies vaccination clinic this month
 - ii. IEH
 - Safety consults to Head Start move to new building
- m. EHSC – *Not on call*

3. HQ Announcements

- a. Injury prevention (Molly Madson)
 - i. Fellowship [2025-2026 cohort]
 - Symposium: 16-17 June 2026
 - Rockville, MD
 - 7 graduates
 - Preparing for 2027/2028 Fellowship: open application window this fall
 - ii. IPS Specialist/PO Meeting
 - 18 June 2026
 - Rockville, MD
 - iii. National Conference on AI/AN Injury and Violence Prevention
 - 15-17 July 2026
 - Green Bay, WI
 - Conference was widely attended, well-executed, and received excellent evaluations so far
 - 349 Registrants, 5 tracks, 80+ presentations, local tribal vendors
 - Opening by Oneida Drum Group, Veterans Honor Guard and Youth Group
 - Keynote Speakers: Dr. Michelle Johnson-Jennings; CAPT (ret.) Holly Billie

iv. TIPCAP (Andrea Tsatoke)

- Workshop
 - 16-17 June 2026
 - Rockville, MD
 - Admin updates
 - TIPCAP panels
 - Networking session
 - Program videos
 - TIPCAP.org
 - Project Officer resources (GPT, cheat sheet, orientation video, etc.)
- Semi-Annual Reports were due on July 31st
 - Template provided
 - TIPCAP Office Hours
- TIPCAP newsletter
- TIPCAP Profiles
- 30 Years of TIPCAP contract forthcoming

b. Institutional EH (Brian Hroch)

i. Annual meeting

- 05-08 August 2026, Minneapolis, MN
- Follows American Society for Health Care Engineering conference
- Will review, assess and prioritize 2025/2026 IEH Program Priorities for 2026/2027

ii. IEH Workforce Development

- USUHS IEH Residency
 - Continue to pursue updated MOA for future residents
- Filed-based Residency
 - LT Pierre first IEH Field-Based Resident
 - PCS'ed 5/24/2026
 - Started MT Tech MS IH Courses 6/1
 - Complete 1st semester in early 8/2026
 - Start 2nd semester 8/24
 - Working to gain approval for announcing next cycle

iii. Professional development

- EHSC courses (Conner*)
 - Accreditation 360 (completed=Parker, Gallup, Billings; upcoming=OKC, Portland)
 - Hospital and Ambulatory Courses (completed=Reno and Keizer, OR; upcoming=Bemidji, PIMC)
 - IEHOs from hosting Areas, OQ and HQ
- SOFR Office Hours held monthly
- Competency development for SOFRs & IEHOs
 - Conner, Cook, Hiles

iv. IH Protocols

- Calvert, Collins, Cook, Kates, Murga, Strauss, Hroch
- Nitrous oxide completed & distributed
- In progress
 - TBD

v. Staffing management

- IEH position templates, including PDs, other HR documents
 - Hroch, Lewelling, Murga, Peaches, need a lead
- SOFR position templates, including PDs, other HR documents
 - Hansen, Hroch, Lewelling, Murga, Peaches, need a lead

i. EC/LS Dashboard Development & Pilot Testing (in progress)

- Conner, Franks, Hroch, Wiggins, Williams, Box, Fish, Hiles, Lewis, Wildcat
- Areas: BE; BI; GP; NV (with plans for AQ & PO)
- Conner, Franks and Hroch presentation at ASHE Conference 8/3/26

ii. PCRA/ICRA 2.0

- PCRA - Pre-Construction Risk Assessment
- ICRA - Infection Control Risk Assessment
- Cook, Box, Conner, Denherder, Fish, Franks, Strauss, [Bryan] Reed

iii. I-STAR (on-going)

- Murga, Hroch, Franks

iv. Accreditation readiness

- Conner, Cook, Franks, Hansen, Hroch, Murga, Peaches, Williams and others
- National Council of Healthcare Safety and Engineering Professionals (NCHSEP)

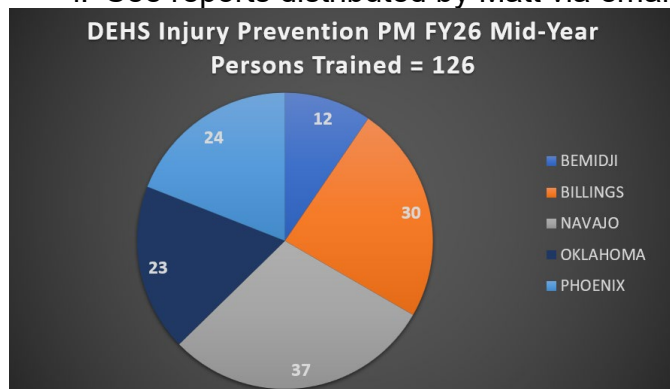
vi. Workplace Violence Sprint (Planning) Workgroup

- Kerns, Franks, Conner, Hroch, OQ Staff
- IHS IHM Chapter undergoing agency revisions before Workgroup follow up and the agency-wide comment period

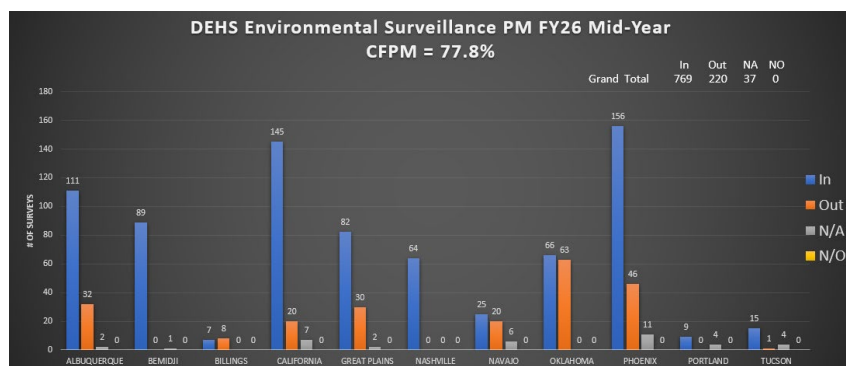
vii. Survey for EHS Healthy Homes and IEH IEQ/IAQ

- Hickey, Hroch, Conner with input from DEHS & IEH reviewers
- Acquisitions to start in October 2026 with Jeff Dickson
- Instruments, references, & resources

- c. Performance Measures update (Sam Frank)
i. See reports distributed by Matt via email on 17 April 2026



Please ensure one entry per training event



- d. Topic Question – How are you ensuring QA/QC of the Environmental Surveillance Performance Measure – CFPM (e.g. Food Handler Training Card ≠ CFPM)? (Stephen Piontkowski)

- i. Summary of responses

- Staff (all staff in one Area are ServSafe Certified Instructors) meet with the person in charge and request the training documentation to see that it is current and appropriate
- For those needing food safety training we offer resources, whether that be a referral or provided by our EH team
- Staff always verify certification during inspection and document the number in the food survey form in WebEHRS
- Staff know the difference between CFPM (certification number and expiration date) and Food Handler Training Card

- WebEHRS
 - Can the CFPM certification number entered in the establishment tab can be added to the final report?
 - Change Control Board worked on this in the past and Sam will look into it
 - When entering CFPM status in the survey form (i.e., in/out) can it be required for the certification number and expiration date be entered when the deficiency is marked “in”?
 - REMINDER: use the feedback request feature for changes
 - Follow-up email sent to Area DEHS Directors regarding expected WebEHRS sync behavior and use of WebEHRS Feedback report if the sync is not working as expected
- e. Miscellaneous (Stephen Piontkowski)
 - See forthcoming emails to Area DEHS Directors for details*
 - i. COSTEP & [Civil Service] EH Externs
 - 2027 wish list request forthcoming
 - 2027 COSTEP application window open 01JUL-18SEPT2026
 - ii. RRM Freeze: October 2026
- f. Reminders (Stephen Piontkowski)
 - i. Take great pics
 - DEHS photo contest
 - EHOs in Action Photo Book
 - ii. Area DEHS & Week-in-Review
 - Submissions
 - Email to ihspublicaffairsstaff@ihs.gov
 - Due Thursdays by 1300 ET
 - January: Alaska
 - February: Albuquerque
 - March: Bemidji
 - April: Billings
 - May: California
 - June: Great Plains
 - July: Nashville
 - August: Navajo
 - September: Oklahoma City
 - October: Phoenix
 - November: Portland
 - December: Tucson

g. Discussion

i. Aquatic/Food establishments survey

- The aquatic/swimming pool surveys, under the establishment information, reads “Certified Food Manager”, “Certified Food Manager First Name/Last Name”, “Certified Food Manager#” – instead of listing “Certified Pool Manager/Operator”
 - Sam will look into it

ii. Hiring challenges severe

- No updates on getting 601 or 688 series vacancies posted
- Frustration throughout OEHE agency-wide
- Agency leaderships states we can post vacancies for district and field offices, but local HR staff we work with contradict that
- This week an Area DEHS Director was asked to justify the posting by answering these four questions
 - How does the position directly support patient care at a direct patient care facility?
 - What specific duties does the position perform that support patient care?
 - Which direct patient care facility or facilities does the position support?
 - How would a vacancy in this position affect patient care or healthcare operations?

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