

DEHS Directors' Meeting: 07 August 2025

[Meeting recording available](#)

Next conference call 06 November 2025 1:00-2:30PM ET

<u>Area</u>	<u>Representative</u>	<u>Area</u>	<u>Representative</u>
Alaska:	Hugh Denny	Nashville:	Mike Hiles
Albuquerque:	<i>Not on call</i>	Navajo:	Helena Shannon
Bemidji:	Tim Duffy	Oklahoma:	Danny Walters
Billings:	Ricardo Murga	Phoenix:	Dave Cramer
California:	<i>Not on call</i>	Portland:	Chris Fish
Great Plains:	<i>Not on call</i>	Tucson:	Valeria Wyatt

Environmental Health Support Center: *Not on call*

DEHS HQ: Matt Albright; Sam Frank; Brian Hroch; Molly Madson; Stephen Piontkowski; Andrea Tsatoke

1. Welcome and Update (Matt Albright)

- a. Mike Reed TDY as Acting Deputy Director, OEHE; Matt Albright, Acting Director, DEHS
- b. IHS Organizational Realignment
 - i. Nothing decided yet
 - ii. DEHS HQ providing input
 - iii. Request for input from Areas forthcoming
 - iv. IHS Employee Town Halls (12, 21, 27 August; see email from IHS for details)
- c. Health Professions Special Pays for Commissioned Corps Officers
 - i. Concerns over high cost of this
 - ii. Special Duty Pays already enacted may need to be adjusted
- d. Basic Allowance for Housing for Commissioned Corps Officers
 - i. CCHQ no longer sending reminders to officers when forms due annually
 - ii. Officers should note when their recertification form is due and ensure they submit it to CCHQ on time
- e. Kavita Vargis, IT, OEHE, HQ
 - i. Preparing to conduct Area site visits to learn more about IT needs and how to integrate systems

2. Area Highlights

a. Alaska

- i. Secretary Kennedy and Ben Smith visiting Alaska Area this week
- ii. Health Professions Special Pays for Commissioned Corps Officers
 - Several Alaska tribes intend to offer these retention benefits
- iii. Kavita may have site visit in September
 - Challenge w tribal EH programs using WebEHRS
- iv. Staffing
 - Norton Sound vacancies: Director OEHE; entry level EHS
- v. EH
 - Alaska Tribal Conference on Environmental Management occurred in April
 - Dog bite data analysis project to determine risk factors
 - Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation's respiratory toolkit provides HEPA filters for residents w chronic respiratory ailments; works as a referral in EHR from the care provider to the EHS (111 homesites participated)
 - Bristol Bay Area Health Corporation updating emergency response plan to include volcanic eruption
- vi. IP
 - Maniilaq Association launching firearm safety project w behavioral health and University of Alaska Fairbanks to provide gun locks and cabinets; works as a referral in EHR from the care provider to the EHS

b. Albuquerque – *Not on call*

c. Bemidji

i. Staffing

- Four vacancies; one recent selection made for Rhinelander
- Central Michigan University's Affiliation Agreement
 - Reads like a contract
 - CMU asked Portland Area DEHS to have this to; so Chris and Tim collaborated
 - OGC suggested not to sign it
 - OGC suggested Tim write a memo to CMU explaining our hiring process and the extern opportunities we can offer
 - Tim submitted memo to CMU and haven't heard back from them yet
 - This may be an issue to DEHS HQ to work w CMU on for entire Division that would cover all potential work assignments
 - Steve will reach out to Chris and Tim to discuss next steps

ii. WebEHRS login issues w a tribal EHS program

- CDP troubleshooting

d. Billings

i. EH

- Lay Vaccination program
 - Blackfeet Tribe recently certified nine individuals to administer vaccinations within their community
 - Northern Cheyenne Tribe certified two of its members to administer vaccinations within their community
 - Rocky Boy Tribe conducted its inaugural rabies lay vaccination clinic. During this event, lay vaccinators were able to offer vaccinations and microchip identification for dogs and cats, this is very exciting because, for the first time they provided these services independently, without the direct supervision of a veterinarian

ii. IP

- Medication lockboxes purchased and received for Crow project
- Training
 - Elder brain health events are being planned at six reservations
 - Planning a Safe Native American Passenger course

iii. IEH

- CMS lifted the threat of termination from the conditions of participation at the Crow Hospital on July 28
 - Now the hospital will be undergoing reconstruction which will include some remodeling
 - It will be completed in three phases and cost of phase 1 is estimated at \$4.3M
- The entire Billings Area is Joint Commission accredited
 - Currently have two hospitals and one ambulatory facility to be surveyed in 2025

e. California – *Not on call*

f. Great Plains – *Not on call*

g. Nashville

i. No report

h. Navajo

i. Staffing

- Fort Defiance District EHO vacancy announcement forthcoming
- Area DEHS Director vacancy announcement forthcoming

- i. Oklahoma City
 - i. Area OEHE succession planning occurring
 - ii. Several health centers experiencing minimal mold growth due to the extremely high humidity levels
 - IEH staff working with them to address/solve the moisture problem and providing safety recommendations during remediation of affected areas
 - iii. Working with Area's Office of Quality to ensure all I-STAR cases are closed for the Claremore Indian Hospital by end of September for the Assumption of services by the Cherokee Nation
 - iv. Attended the annual THESIS (Tribal Health Experiential Student Intern Seminar) as a mentor
 - This program is for up-and-coming Native American students who have or are about to graduate and are pursuing a career in public health
 - Hosted by the Southern Plains Tribal Health Board
- j. Phoenix
 - i. Staffing
 - Hosted two COSTEPs (Averi Sills and Arilyn Lee)
 - GS-7/9/11 vacancy in Hopi
 - GS-12 Sanitarian Consultant in Eastern AZ District forthcoming
 - ii. EH
 - RMSF Campaign in San Carlos July 14-18
 - 474 homes visited
 - 343 homes treated
 - 851 dogs treated with tick oil or collar
 - Rabies prevention
 - 170 animal bites in Whiteriver this FY (average is 130 bites/year)
 - Two rabid bobcats in San Carlos this year
 - NEHA was in Phoenix
 - Aide De Camp for CAPT Jiggins
 - Helped coordinate social event
 - Assisting with response to concerns of potential lead exposure concerns at some hospital housing compounds

iii. IP

- Manuscript on Firearm Storage Cabinets submitted to BMJ
- Rob is making the rounds visiting tribes to assemble local data for TIPCAP applications
- Area IP team was able to find an alternate source of child safety seats for Arizona tribes after the state health department became unable to support
 - Staff leveraged their contacts with the Arizona Governor's Office of Highway safety; so far GOHS has purchased 695 car seats for Arizona tribes and pledged support through all of FY26
 - This is Phoenix Area initiative, but we could try to plug in Navajo and Tucson Areas if there is interest
- CPS training, 25-28 August, Reno

iv. IEH

- LT Beau Carter reported to Phoenix Indian Medical Center this week, joining LCDR Mistin Ray
- Coordinated Return to In Person Work
 - Matched 264 Phoenix Area IHS employees to offices in the Phoenix Area Office building
 - Matched 25 IHS HQ and other IHS Area employees to offices in the Phoenix Area Office building
 - Identified Fed office space for 20 Phoenix Area employees in TX, WI, GA, CA, OK, MT, and Navajo
- Safety Officer Fundamentals course in May
- AAAHC course, Reno, September

k. Portland

- i. Participated in annual review of an urban Indian health center
 - Functioned as an accreditation mock survey
 - DEHS role was to focus on environment of care

ii. Budget management

iii. Staffing

- Shawn Blackshear reported to Yakama Field Office
- COSTEP assignment ends today
 - Special project was to draft a report on vectorborne zoonotic diseases in Pacific Northwest

iv. EH

- Colville Tribe to 638 Colville Service Unit soon
- Bureau of Indian Education adding traditional foods to school lunch program
 - Collaborating and providing TA

v. IEH

- Spokane Tribe of Indians 638 of Wellpinit Service Unit except IEH shares
 - EH shares already w Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board
- Fundamentals of Ambulatory Health and Safety course
 - Oregon, 21-23 October
 - Thanks to EHSC for support

vi. IP

- Chris will attend TIPCAP workshop next week

vii. Reviewed Federal Protective Service bill for Portland Area Office

- Anyone w experience w their services please contact Chris

I. Tucson

i. EH

- Partnering with Ft. Huachuca veterinarians to administer rabies vaccinations once a quarter
 - First event was in June, next event, potentially September
- Tucson Indian Center Annual Review – the TIC has been providing community outreach for years, but this is the first full year of clinical services and we will be covering environmental health and patient safety as it relates to clinical services; been providing resources encouraging TIC to find a software program to
 - Track inventory/calibration of medical equipment... maybe Nuvolo
 - Add a program to track incidents... maybe ISTAR
 - Include a process for receiving and investigating complaints
- Pascua Yaqui acquired additional land in City of Tucson, that has three operating retail food establishments; working to connect with owners of the franchises to discuss next steps; PYT leading – this is the tribe's first experience assuming urban retail food operations
 - Please contact Valeria if you have experience with such operations and DEHS roles
- Pima County received a water safety grant from the CDC Foundation and would like to partner with Pascua Yaqui to offer swimming lessons
 - We have a meeting between Pima County and Pascua Yaqui, wellness center, and grants management specialist to discuss this potential opportunity

ii. IP

- TIPCAP 2026-2030 interest from Tohono O'odham Nation and Pascua Yaqui
 - Upcoming meeting with Pascua Yaqui to review grant packet
- Hosting IP Fellowship Field Course in October
 - Prep ongoing

m. EHSC – *Not on call*

3. HQ Announcements

a. Injury prevention (Molly Madson)

i. Fellowship [2025-2026 cohort]

- Field course: 19-24 October 2025; Tucson
- Symposium: 16-17 June 2026; Rockville, MD
- Please ensure fellowship mentors are fulfilling their obligations

ii. Training

- IP short courses train-the-trainer course being developed
- 2025 schedule delayed

iii. IPS Position at EHSC

- Interviews forthcoming

iv. Injury Focus Report

- Data pulled
- Plan to finalize in CY25

v. National Conference on AI/AN Injury and Violence Prevention

- Postponed

vi. TIPCAP (Andrea Tsatoke)

- Annual Workshop being planned
 - Madison, WI in conjunction with KIDZ IN MOTION & IPS meeting
 - Hosted by Ho-Chunk Nation
 - Featuring lighting rounds, celebrating success
- Hosted TIPCAP webinar on sharing your impact w data
- No Cost Extension due 31 October
- Notice of Funding Opportunity 2026-2030
 - [NOFO](#) closes 13 November
 - EHSC Office Hours 20 August
 - Webinar TBA
 - Tools & template on [TIPCAP website](#)

b. Institutional EH (Brian Hroch)

i. Annual meeting

- 30 July-01 August, Columbus, OH
- Follows American Society of Safety Professionals Conference
- Program Priorities 2024/2025 will become 2025/2026

ii. IEH Workforce Development

- USUHS IEH Residency
 - 2026 Academic Year: ongoing planning
- Filed-based Residency
 - 2025 Academic Year: announced, not selection made
 - 2026 Academic Year: making revisions and planning to announce

iii. Professional development

- SOFR Office Hours held monthly
- Competency development for SOFRs & IEHOs
- Fundamentals of Hospital and Ambulatory Safety Management
 - FY25
 - Completed: Phoenix and Alaska
 - Planned: Reno and Portland
 - Accreditation 360 in development

iv. IH Protocols

- Hroch, Murga, Cook, Kates
- Finalized and distributed
 - Ergonomics
 - Ventilation
 - IAQ

v. Safe Patient Handling & Mobility

- Hansen, Hiles, Hroch
- HFAC/OEHE A/E Design Guide update

vi. Staffing management

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

vii. EC/LS Dashboard Development and Pilot Testing (in progress)

- Conner, Franks, Hroch, Williams, Woodlee
- Areas: BE; BI; GP; NV

viii. I-STAR

- Hroch, Murga, Woodlee
- SOP, core team, contract, contract, migration

- ix. Accreditation readiness
 - EC/LS Workgroup
 - Conner, Cook, Franks, Hansen, Hroch, Murga, Peaches, Williams, Woodlee
 - Charter development for National Council of Healthcare Safety and Engineering Professionals (NCHSEP)
- x. Navajo Area Strike Team
 - Staff from OEHE HQ & NV
- c. WebEHRS (Sam Frank)
 - i. MFA/SSO complete
 - Login instructions available on [Help and Support Page](#)
 - ii. Mobile² [Activities Form](#) complete
 - iii. eSurvey Modifications and Enhancements
 - MAHC checklist and aquatic facilities updates
 - Type 55 Establishment merge
 - Mass gatherings temp events checklist development
 - iv. Esri Healthy Homes Initiative
 - GIS/Data capture
 - Field data collection form
 - Reporting dashboard
 - WebEHRS integration
- d. Other IT Systems Updates
 - i. Annual security assessment this summer
 - ii. OEHE Dashboard
 - Visualization enhancements
 - Data refresh in the works
 - iii. NDECI Development
 - New page for patient counts and visualizations
 - ED visits filter
 - iv. FY25 Performance Measures Review
 - Document in WebEHRS by 30 September 2025
 - Refer to 2021-2025 guidance
 - Mid-year results
 - Environmental Surveillance: 74.2%
 - Injury Prevention: 84

- e. Performance Measures 2026-2030 (Matt Albright)
 - i. Will use same measures as last 5-year cycle
 - Percentage of Food Establishments with a Certified Food Protection Manager
 - Number of People Trained in IP
 - ii. Guidance documents will be finalized soon and distributed
- f. Miscellaneous (Stephen Piontkowski)
 - i. [2023](#) and [2024](#) DEHS Annual Reports available
 - ii. COSTEP & [Civil Service] EH Externs
 - 9 total (6 COSTEPs, 3 civil service) (9th to begin assignment infall 2025)
 - Symposium 01 August
 - Narratives due at end of tour
 - 2026 wish list request forthcoming
 - 2026 COSTEP application window open 01 July-15 September 2025
 - EHAC JRCOSTEP/Civil Service [Externship Webinar 03 September](#)
 - iii. RRM Freeze: October 2025
 - iv. Staffing report: November 2025
 - Please ensure careful review and accurate reporting
 - v. Take great pics
 - DEHS photo contest
 - EHOPAC's EHOs in Action Photo Book

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