DEHS Directors’ Meeting: 12/03/20
Meeting recording available: https://ihs.cosocloud.com/pwf84c62d8kg/

Next conference call February 04, 2021 1:00-2:00PM ET

Alaska: Denman Ondelacy  
Albuquerque: Carrie Oyster  
Bemidji: Tim Taylor  
Billings: Darcy Merchant  
California: Carolyn Garcia  
Great Plains: Tim Wildcat  

Nashville: Kit Grosch  
Navajo: Donna Gilbert  
Oklahoma: Danny Walters  
Phoenix: Kenny Hicks  
Portland: Not on call  
Tucson: Travis Bowser

Environmental Health Support Center: Jeff Dickson  
Rockville: Kelly Taylor, Martin Smith, Holly Billie, Charles Woodlee, Mike Reed, Molly Madson, Stephen Piontkowski

1. Director’s Welcome and Update (Kelly Taylor)
   a. Happy Thanksgiving!
   b. DEHS COVID-19 contributions summary document
      i. Thank you for submitting your updates
      ii. The information sharing is very important & useful
   c. USPHS COERS – be mindful of deadlines
   d. USPHS promotion – be mindful of deadlines, requirements, & resources
   e. USPHS Town Halls – intended to improve communication with COs
      i. Chief Professional Officers very involved with helping CCHQ & OSG address the topics accurately
      ii. Please encourage your COs to provide input/concerns/feedback when queried via EHOPAC email messages
   f. Thank you for being on this call given your very busy schedules
2. Area Highlights

**Vaccine Distribution**

*Is your environmental health program involved with COVID-19 vaccine distribution?*

*If so, how are you involved?*

a. Alaska
   i. Vaccine Distribution – Unsure, will find out
   ii. Other COVID-19
      - All staff rising to the occasion & meeting mission needs
   iii. Met with ANTHC this week & will meet all Tribal EH Directors next week
      - Great concern of the surge among the villages; one village (population ~ 300-400) is 50% COVID-19+
      - Contact tracing
      - Virology testing
      - Conducting virtual inspections of clinic buildings to ensure accreditation
      - Portable alternative sanitation system for communities w/o community systems being installed (~ 50) & evaluated
      - Working with State of Alaska on system operator certification testing
      - Plan to hire externs
   iv. Alaska Tribal EH annual meeting approaching
   v. Discussion about externs

b. Albuquerque
   i. Vaccine Distribution – Peripheral
   ii. Other COVID-19
      - Safety Officer roles
      - Infection control
      - Challenges requesting additional staff

c. Bemidji
   i. Vaccine Distribution – Yes
      - Planning
      - Anticipating role in transporting vaccine
   ii. Other COVID-19
      - 3 DEHS staff on Area ICS
      - Ongoing guidance document updates
      - Ongoing PPE management
   iii. Staffing
      - GS-12 IP Specialist vacancy announcement forthcoming early CY21
      - New joint venture facility on White Earth in Naytahwaush, MN may provide additional FTEs
d. Billings
   i. Vaccine Distribution – Yes
      • Equipment needed to store vaccine
      • TA on safety issues (e.g. PPE) related to cold chain transport
      • Staffing plan, vaccination plan, PPE available & used, vaccine transportation
   ii. Other COVID-19
      • Collaborating with CDC deployment teams on infection control at schools, childcare, & nursing homes
      • Conducting routine establishment inspections as needed
   iii. Staffing
      • Selection made for Wind River SU vacancy

e. California
   i. Vaccine Distribution – Yes
      • Participate on Area Vaccine Taskforce
      • TA on safety issues (e.g. PPE) related to cold chain transport
      • May assist with ordering vaccine
   ii. Other COVID-19
      • DEHS advised tribal gaming establishments to follow their local county guidance on COVID-19 precautions/closure recommendations
      • TA on establishment closures & COVID-19+ case response
      • Assisting with test kit orders
   iii. Staffing
      • Selectee for the RDO position reported to duty mid-October
      • Re-advertising EHO vacancy in Ukiah Field Office as a Pathway position
   iv. Reviewing food service plans
   v. Conducting virtual & in-person surveys of establishments (e.g. food, childcare)
   vi. Conducting virtual infection control/BBP trainings
   vii. IP mini-grant applications in December

f. Great Plains
   i. Vaccine Distribution – Yes
      • Assembled information on facilities’ capabilities to receive vaccine
   ii. Other COVID-19
      • Assist with introductory phase of mass testing events
   iii. Conducting routine EH surveys as needed
   iv. I-STAR support ongoing
g. Nashville

i. Vaccine Distribution – Yes
   - TA on safety issues (e.g. PPE) related to cold chain transport

ii. Other COVID-19
   - Increase of employee exposures; most are community spread
   - Ongoing guidance document updates
   - Provided disinfection consultations to IHS facilities
   - Consultations to facilities undergoing renovations (e.g. ventilation)

iii. Conducting virtual EH surveys as needed

iv. Providing virtual trainings as needed (e.g. HAZCOM, BBP/Infection Control)

v. Riley remains on TDY thru Feb 2021

h. Navajo

i. Vaccine Distribution – No, only as it relates to DEHS staff in ICS

ii. Other COVID-19
   - Health centers request DEHS staff
   - Tribe on 3 week lock down

iii. Assisting with Navajo Water Access Mission

i. Oklahoma City

i. Vaccine Distribution – Yes
   - Danny Walters, David Bales, & Chris Kates on Area’s vaccine distribution workgroup tasked with developing vaccine delivery competencies, chain-of-custody forms, and ensuring vaccine delivery
   - Created list of COs (currently all OEHE staff) who will be responsible for transporting vaccine from Area’s “hub” sites to all federal & tribal health sites; DEHS field staff “back-up” for transport if needed

ii. Other COVID-19
   - All field staff conducting monthly PPE “spot checks” at all federal hospitals & clinics

j. Phoenix

i. Vaccine Distribution – No, only as it relates to DEHS staff in ICS
   - Area ICS support re: transportation prep & Area/Regional representation on partnership calls
   - Anticipate DEHS staff supporting vaccine safety-related issues for distribution or mass vaccination clinics; but no requests yet

ii. Other COVID-19
   - LT Braden Hickey, SUEHO, Colorado River SU, serving a TDY assignment to support NAV Water Access Project (28NOV-23DEC)
   - Ongoing support re: pre-opening consultations & inspections of community-based establishments & enterprises, including gaming & hotel operations
   - Multiple DEHS staff conducting respirator fit testing of health care personnel for recently received supplies of new Halyard N-95 respirators
• DEHS staff supporting Infection Control Assessment and Response consults at IHS & Tribal sites

iii. Staffing
• Beginning to receive certificates & conduct interviews to fill multiple GS7/9/11 field positions (San Carlos, AZ; Fort Duchesne, UT; Yuma, AZ; Parker, AZ; Reno, NV; Phoenix, AZ)
• COSTEPs: Interviewed & selected 2 for placement in Reno, NV & Lakeside, AZ; 1662s being processed through CC Liaison

iv. Injury Prevention
• TIPCAP close out
• Managing Area mini-projects
• Lock box project continues to inform initiatives (e.g. Cornell Univ using as a model; HQ Pharm re: safe med disposal/storage)

v. Toiyabe Indian Health Project (Coleville, CA)
• Health facility a total loss due to range fire
• OEHE staff responding: consults on haz waste clean-up (collaborating with CA IHS); supporting SFC with water access issues

k. Portland
i. – Not on call

l. Tucson
i. Vaccine Distribution – Yes
• DEHS staff is Area’s vaccine POC
• DEHS staff is Area’s Vaccine Administration Management System Coordinator (filling this role b/c of Area CMO vacancy)

ii. Other COVID-19
• DEHS staff is Area EMPOC & SO
• Ongoing PPE management
• Ongoing test kit ordering

iii. Staffing: Hired new EHO in November

iv. All casinos open & fully operational, routine surveys conducted

3. HQ Announcements
a. DEHS Area staffing reports
i. Due by 31 December 2020;
ii. Thanks to the Area’s who already submitted theirs

b. DEHS Award Nominations 2020
i. 2020 Environmental Health Specialist of the Year; nominations due to CAPT Stephen R. Piontkowski by 08 January 2021
ii. 2020 Gary J. Gefroh Health and Safety Award; nominations due to CAPT Charles Woodlee by 12 February 2021
iii. 2020 Rick Smith Injury Prevention Award; nominations due to CAPT Holly Billie by 12 February 2021

c. COSTEPs 2021
i. 10 students from 9 universities being placed in 7 Areas
ii. 1662s are due to DCPS by 11 December
d. Injury prevention (Holly Billie)
   i. Alcohol impaired driving pilot (2020-2025)
      • Tri-agency collaboration (IHS, NHTSA, CDC)
      • NHTSA will provide majority of funding & SMEs
      • IHS will provide SMEs
      • CDC will provide evaluation
      • IAA being developed
      • Year 1: Conduct needs assessment
      • Year 2: Analyze assessment & plan for work ahead
      • Year 3: Fund tribes
      • Year 4: Fund tribes
      • Year 5: Evaluation
   ii. TIPCAP
      • 33 applications received; selections in progress
      • Kick-off meeting in early spring 2021
   iii. Recent IP meetings recently completed, please reach out to your Area IP representative for more info

e. IEH (Charles Woodlee)
   i. Residency
      • No applicants for the 2021-2023 USU Residency
      • Renewed intent for establishing a field-based residency
   ii. Chapter 9 Policy Revisions are pending final review by IHS OD
   iii. WebCident Replacement
      • All Area now live in I-STAR
      • WebCident is offline for reporting, but still available for investigations
      • Migration of historical data expected in late December/early January
      • Forthcoming: more job aides on use of queries & reports
      • Specific job aide on use of COVID-19 dashboard to be distributed soon
      • Thanks to all the staff who have been helping with this transition

f. NDECI (Mike Reed)
   i. August launch delayed b/c of COVID-19
   ii. Enhancements made this fall
   iii. Launch likely in FY21 second quarter

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