



# Environmental Health Services

● *Healthy Environments = Healthy People* ●

## 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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