

CHAPTER 112-1 OPERATIONAL MODEL

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112-1.1 BACKGROUND

A. ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

The mission of the Indian Health Service (IHS) is to raise the physical, mental, social, and spiritual health of American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/AN) to the highest level with a goal to assure that comprehensive, culturally acceptable personal and public health services are available and accessible to AI/AN people. The Office of Environmental Health and Engineering advances the mission of the Agency by building and maintaining modern healthcare facilities, designing and installing sanitation and public works infrastructure, and providing comprehensive environmental health services for AI/AN people and communities.

The mission of the Division of Environmental Health Services (DEHS) is: "Through shared decision making and sound public health measures, enhance the health and quality of life of all American Indians and Alaska Natives to the highest level by eliminating environmentally related disease and injury".

In the IHS, the DEHS provides consultative public health services. The DEHS program serves as advisors to Tribes; DEHS is not a regulatory program.

B. POLICY

The Indian Health Manual Part 3, Chapter 11, Environmental Health (hereafter referred to as "Chapter 11") establishes policy for Environmental Health Services and Sanitation Facilities Construction delivery to all AI/AN communities. The policy describes background, priorities, authorities, organization, responsibilities and defines sixteen program elements. A common set of core services should be conducted for all program elements. These common services are accomplished through various activities

and are based on the core functions of public health as described by [CDC's *The Ten Essential Environmental Public Health Services*](#).

C. DOCUMENT PURPOSE AND INTENDED USE

This operational model describes core services for environmental health (EH) programs. Depending on the local need and resources, additional services may be provided. This document is intended for EH staff as program guidance. It should be used by Area, District, and field programs to structure and evaluate their program and orient new staff. While this operational model is intended for IHS DEHS programs, it can also be used as a framework for tribes that elect to operate EH programs.

D. GLOSSARY OF TERMS

BEST PRACTICE - Public health programs, interventions, and policies that have been evaluated, shown to be successful, and have the potential to be adapted and transformed by others working in the same field.

eSURVEY - Electronic inspection data entry forms found in the DEHS Web-based Environmental Health Reporting System (WebEHRS).

FIELD - There are four levels of service in the DEHS organizational structure: Headquarters, Area, District, and Field. Field staff normally provide services at the tribal community level. The terms, "Service Unit" and "local" are also used in IHS to refer to tribal community or field level services.

INSPECTION - an objective process by which the inspector is checking or testing criteria against established standards (regulatory or voluntary). The purpose is to identify risk factors that could cause illness or injury, and make recommendations for improvement based on sound public health measures. The term "survey" is a synonym of "inspection". It is often used by IHS to denote that the agency is non-regulatory and services are performed on behalf of Tribal governments.

INVESTIGATION - Environmental appraisal of a condition or situation based on a complaint, request, referral, or through observations or findings identified by an environment health specialist.

SURVEILLANCE - Public health surveillance is the continuous, systematic collection, analysis and interpretation of health-related data needed for the planning, implementation, and evaluation of public health practice.

Surveillance can:

- (a) Serve as an early warning system for impending public health emergencies;
- (b) Document the impact of an intervention, or track progress towards specified goals; and
- (c) Monitor and clarify the epidemiology of health problems, to allow priorities to be set and to inform public health policy and strategies.¹

THE TEN ESSENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES - The Center for Disease Control and Prevention's, The Ten Essential Environmental Public Health Services, describes the public health activities that all communities should undertake.

¹ Definition from the [World Health Organization](#).