

# Session Abstracts

National Environmental Health Association (NEHA)  
71<sup>st</sup> Annual Educational Conference & Exhibition

## **Environmental Health Leadership Development**

Wednesday, June 20

8:30 – 9:20am

### **Developing a Passion for Environmental Health**

*Pete D. Thornton, RS, MPH, DAAS, Environmental Administrator, Volusia County Health Dept., FL*

In the time it takes to provide this lecture, 1,500 people will die of a preventable infectious disease. One half of them will be children. While not vocalized, a typical reaction is that these people are overseas, or there is nothing I can do about it, or these are just numbers. Many professionals state that they have a passion for their job, but interviews reveal that they just love their job. True passion involves the emotions of hate, grief, love, fear, joy, and others. This lecture will describe how passion, not love, has a direct effect on our ability to conduct public health programs. Employees need to develop hate, fear, joy and the other emotions if they are to truly develop a passion and therefore affect disease levels. The lecture will describe why passion is needed, and how to work toward it.

9:30 – 11:20am

### **Innovative Workforce Development Practices: Case Studies**

#### **Practical Training on Wimpy Training Budgets**

*Ken Sharp, Executive Officer, Iowa Dept. of Health, IA*

The Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) and its partners have been able to organize and or provide quality continuing education opportunities for local environmental health professionals. Annually, IDPH has been able to offer an average of six regional training programs. These programs have been offered at a cost of no more than \$25/person/day. Professional associations have been key partners in this effort that have provided technical knowledge, professional contractors, and key support in curriculum development and even provide course instructors that volunteer their time to teach these courses. Training programs focus on the need for practical and applicable training. Over the last five years IDPH has helped organize and offer over 40 training programs that have provided low cost continuing education to over 1200 attendees. These training programs are a key component of continuing education and the advancement of the environmental health workforce in Iowa.

### **Three-Strike Approach to Workforce Development in Environmental Health**

*Alicia Enriquez, REHS, Environmental Program Manager, Sacramento County Environmental Management Dept., CA*

This presentation will detail the efforts made by the Sacramento County Environmental Management Department's Environmental Health Division (EMD) to stimulate growth in the area of career awareness for the Registered Environmental Health Specialist (REHS). EMD is responsible for the regulatory oversight of Retail Food Facilities, Recreational Health Facilities, Tobacco Retailers, Institutional Facilities and Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention. The division faces a unique recruitment need as it embarks on several *Food Program Enhancements* created to reduce the incidence of major violations in retail food facilities. In recent years, EMD shifted to a risk based inspection frequency, increasing inspection frequencies for all retail food facilities throughout the County, expectedly requiring an increase in staffing.

In response to the aforementioned changing climate, specific steps have been taken to generate career awareness, subsequently attracting more individuals to the environmental health profession. Namely, EMD has focused on: (1) participation in career fairs, (2) student intern program, and (3) REHS trainee program.

### **Internship Opportunities as a Keystone to Workforce Development**

*Lila Wickham, RN, MS, EH Director, Multnomah County Health Dept., OR*  
*Jon Kawaguchi, REHS, Senior EH Specialist, Multnomah County Health Dept., OR*

In an effort to stave off the effects of a retiring workforce and the impacts of limited curriculum in environmental health at the academic level, Multnomah County Environmental Health developed strategies to hire competent and qualified environmental health personnel. Mobilizing educational partnerships with academic institutions to develop environmental health internship and training opportunities is the cornerstone of the project. The internships are focused on training and educating students to peak their interest and better prepare them for the environmental health workforce. Collaborative activities include developing internship curriculum, matching students to internship opportunities and evaluating student performance. Since implementation of this strategy two years ago Multnomah County Environmental Health has hired three interns and prepared other potential workers with key knowledge and skills. We are pleased to offer this product to other jurisdictions in an effort to promote environmental public health as a viable career.

### **Recruitment and Retention Efforts in Riverside County**

*Steve Van Stockum, Deputy Director II, County of Riverside, CA*

The Riverside County Department of Environmental Health has successfully explored a variety of innovative solutions to the problems of retaining experienced staff, and in recruiting qualified applicants. We also employ a unique interviewing process to make sure we get good people who have the correct attitude and philosophy which our Department is looking for.

1:00 – 2:50pm

**Panel: National Environmental Public Health Performance Standards: The Next Step in Enhancing Services**

*Moderator: Sarah B. Kotchian, EdM, MPH, PhD, Associate Director for Planning, University of New Mexico Institute of Public Health, NM*

*Panelists:*

*CAPT Patrick O. Bohan, PhD, MS, MSEH, RS, USPHS (Ret.), Assistant Professor, East Central University, OK*

*Sharunda Buchanan, PhD, Director of the Division of Emergency and Environmental Health Services, CDC, GA*

*Michelle Chuk, MPH, Senior Advisor, NACCHO, Washington, DC*

*Tom Dickey, REHS, Project Coordinator, NEHA, ND*

*Pete D. Thornton, RS, MPH, DAAS, Environmental Administrator, Volusia County Health Dept., FL*

The purpose of state, tribal, and local environmental health programs is to prevent environmentally-related illness and injury through the identification and reduction of risk in the community. The Environmental Public Health Performance Standards (EPHPS) were developed to describe how environmental health programs can better fulfill their purpose. The standards allow programs to assess their capability to perform the essential services which can lead to improved health and reduced risk in the community. Using the standards can result in improved capacity to perform the essential services. The EPHPS were developed in consultation with experienced environmental health managers in cooperation with CDC. The standards were been applied in sixty local health departments. Results and comparisons to the National Public Health Performance Standards will be discussed. The session includes presentations on the development of the standards, their use to improve program performance, and efforts by CDC for broader national application.

3:00 – 3:50pm

**The Use of the National Public Health Performance Standards as an Evaluation Tool to Determine Change in Capacity**

*Gerald M. Barron, MPH, Associate Professor, University of Pittsburgh, PA*

The use of the national public health performance standards (NPHPS) helped set a benchmark for improving the capacity of the environmental health services at one local county health department. Following the completion of the standards, efforts were focused on strengthening areas where little or no capacity was reported. The standards were applied again to determine improvement from the baseline measure.

4:00 – 4:50pm

**Advancing Environmental Health Practice Through Evaluation Training**

*Carl Osaki, RS, MSPH, Clinical Associate Professor, University of Washington, WA*

This presentation will describe an on-line training module that has been designed for environmental health practitioners interested in evaluating their programs and activities. The module was developed by the University of Washington's Regional Academic

Environmental Public Health Center (a program funded by NCEH, CDC) as a result of an expressed need indicated by environmental health practitioners in 9 Northwest and Plains States served by the Center. The module addresses 3 core environmental health competencies and one of the Essential Services of Environmental Health. The contents of the training module will be described and illustrated. These include sections such as about the basics of evaluation, a case scenario to illustrate concepts, methods to assess understanding of the concepts, a practice template for individuals to use, and resources and links to assist users in applying concepts. Instructions on how to access the module and its intended audience will also be described.