


NEHA NEWS

Environmental Health Workforce Campaign



JENNIFER
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SPECIALIST
Richland Public Health - Ohio

- Better known as "Tattoo Bodyguard"
- Making sure your tattoo is safe one ink bottle at a time
- I am environmental public health



SCOTT
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH DIRECTOR
Licking County Health Department - Ohio

- They call me the "H2O Hero"
- You can find me identifying hazards in our local water systems
- I am environmental public health

In 2022, the National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) Board of Directors shared concerns they had heard from members—and had experienced themselves—about how invisible and undervalued they felt as a profession. This concern was particularly true among environmental health professionals who work in governmental public environmental health, and especially throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

In response, we have developed a campaign to raise the visibility and appreciation of our important workforce among decision makers and the public. The campaign strategy is four-fold and focuses on addressing the complex issues that influence the environmental health workforce. The campaign strategies include:

- **Self-Promotion Materials:**

Most environmental health work is done at the state, local, tribal, and territorial level. To that end, we are developing tool kits, templates, and messaging for environmental health organizations to help promote the success and expertise of our workforce.

- **Advertising Campaign:** We have developed the Swipe Right advertising campaign that tells your story and expresses the value of environmental health professionals. This strategy primes and builds on the work of self-promotion. The advertising will target individuals who make decisions that impact the environmental health workforce.
- **Leadership Discussions:** This strategy brings together environmental health leaders from across the country to create a united vision for the environmental health profession in the U.S. We will serve as the catalyst and facilitator of discussions on key issues of concern.
- **Community Outreach:** This strategy involves the identification of organizations and initiatives across the country where environmental health representation is needed and creates a process for ongoing representation at state, local, tribal, and territorial levels.

The advertising campaign portion of the larger initiative—**Swipe Right for Environmental Health**—launched as a pilot in Ohio during May and June 2023, and will advertise again in September. The advertising targeted decision makers at and around the Ohio Statehouse. The campaign ads feature three environmental health professionals from Ohio and urge viewers to support environmental health.

In September, we invite you and your organization to amplify the campaign by sharing the messages on your social media channels. The more of us who share the message, the more it will spread. Here are options to share the message:

- Visit any of our social media accounts and repost/share/retweet to your audience.
- Download the videos and share them on your website or in a newsletter.
- Post the videos on your social media with the accompanying text: If you care about clean air and water, safe food, and healthy schools, you've got a match with an environmental health specialist ["near you" or "at name of your organization"].
- Boost any of these messages on your social media channels to reach even more people.

We are here to help. If you or your communication staff need assistance, email communications@neha.org and we will do all we can to assist.

The campaign website and ads can be viewed at www.neha.org/swipe-right. After the pilot in Ohio is complete, we will analyze the results and make adjustments as needed. Our Board Marketing Committee will determine the next areas of focus following the pilot.

Grant Portal for the NEHA-FDA Retail Flexible Funding Model Grant Program Opens in August

NEHA and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) work in partnership to administer the NEHA-FDA Retail Flexible Funding Model (RFFM) Grant Program. The program provides funding to state, local, tribal, and territorial retail food regulatory agencies as they advance conformance with the FDA Voluntary National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards (Retail Program Standards). FDA is utilizing our strength to assist retail food safety programs in their efforts to reduce the occurrence of foodborne illness risk factors and implement and attain conformance with the Retail Program Standards.

The grant portal for Year 3 of the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program will open on **August 16**. Retail food safety programs can apply for a base grant (through one of two tracks) and up to three additional add-on grants for Track 2 applicants and Track 3 grantees. Interested programs can apply for:

- A Track 1 Development Base Grant with options to be a mentee and/or attend a self-assessment and verification audit (SA/VA) workshop.

- A Track 2 Development Base Grant with options to be a mentee, work on Standard 9, and/or attend retail training courses.
- Optional Add-On Grants:
 - » In addition to the options above, Track 2 applicants may also apply to be a mentor (instead of a mentee) and/or apply for a Special Projects Grant.
 - » Existing Track 3 Maintenance and Advancement Base Grantees may apply to be a mentor or a mentee, request funds for retail training courses, and/or apply for a Special Projects Grant.

The grant portal will close on October 11. Learn more at www.neha.org/retail-grants.

Government Affairs Updates

By Doug Farquhar (dfarquhar@neha.org)



Photo courtesy of Doug Farquhar.

We continue to advocate for the environmental health profession at the federal and state levels. Here is a summary of our recent activities to promote the interests of our members and the environmental health workforce. Learn more about our activities through our Government Affairs webpage at www.neha.org/advocacy.

Support of FDA Food Safety Efforts

We met with congressional appropriators at the end of April to discuss the importance of FDA budgets for food safety to state, local, tribal, and territorial environmental health agencies. Our delegation was led by our director of Government Affairs and included staff who have worked within local and state health and agriculture agencies. We emphasized the value of the FDA *Food Code* and Voluntary National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards in decreasing the occurrence of foodborne illness outbreaks. These programs make FDA one of the foremost federal agencies promoting public health. We met with 17 congressional offices from 13 different states.

Support for the Environmental Health Profession

We were back at the nation's capital in early May to advocate for the inclusion of the environmental health workforce in the Public Health Workforce Loan Repayment Program. We met with office staff of Representative Haley Stevens (D-MI) to encourage her to sign on to the letter we are currently circulating through Congress that seeks support for our profession in the loan repayment program. We also spoke with office staff of Representative Rosa DeLauro (D-CT). Furthermore, we have reached out to several congressional offices from both parties and chambers to let the Health Resources & Services Administration know that Congress intended for environmental health to be included in the federal loan repayment for public health workers.

Blog Posts in May

We also posted a blog in mid-May about the markup of the fiscal year 2024 appropriations bill by the U.S. House Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies. The blog explores the differing views of both political parties regarding the budget, as well as areas where they are in agreement. Specifically, both parties agree there is a need to increase funding for food safety.

Finally, we posted another blog in mid-May about the redesign of public health agencies within two states. States are beginning to recognize that public health is not meeting its goals and missions. One state, Iowa, is seeking to remedy this situation by combining its public health agencies. South Carolina, on the other hand, is trying a solution that divides its main public health agency. Both efforts impact the environmental health programs in these states.

You can read these blogs, as well as all our past blogs, at www.neha.org/government-affairs-blog.

Climate and Health Guides for Environmental Public Health Programs



State, local, tribal, and territorial environmental public health professionals play a critical role in addressing the health and well-being of their communities and environment. They are also well-positioned to address health inequities that are exacerbated by climate change and environmental injustice. Climate change impacts the health and well-being of humans, with the most vulnerable populations bearing a large

portion of the burdens. Environmental public health professionals can directly engage with at-risk communities to integrate climate change and environmental justice considerations into their core programs and services. Our new climate and health guide—*Integrating Environmental Justice and Climate and Health: Examples for Environmental Public Health Programs*—provides examples of how to integrate environmental justice and climate and health to improve health outcomes.

The guide briefly explores the impact of climate change and on human health and environmental justice on health equity. It provides information on how to incorporate environmental justice into core programs and services, including use of the CORE (Cultivate comprehensive health equity science, Optimize interventions, Reinforce and expand robust partnerships, and Enhance capacity and workforce engagement) Health Equity Science and Intervention Strategy from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and our Climate Health Adaptation and Mitigation Partnership (CHAMP) framework.

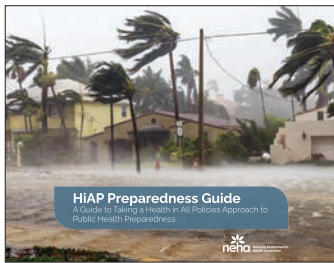
The guide also provides specific information related to air quality (ambient and indoor), emergency preparedness and response,

food safety, hazardous materials and waste management, water quality, and vector control. Each topic section covers the following:

- Climate change impact
- Health equity impact
- Examples of integrating environmental justice and climate and health considerations regarding assessment and policy, cross-sectoral engagement, and education and outreach

Rounding out the guide are relevant definitions and resources that can support these efforts. Access the guide at www.neha.org/climate-change.

Health in All Policies Preparedness Guide



Our new Health in All Policies (HiAP) Preparedness Guide provides a framework to take a HiAP approach to public health preparedness to improve the depth and effectiveness of collaboration at all stages of response. According to the World Health Organization (2014), HiAP is an “approach to public policies across sectors that systematically takes into account the health implications of decisions, seeks synergies, and avoids harmful health impacts in order to improve population health and health equity.”

Public health is impacted by policies, plans, programs, and projects across private, public, and community-based organizations. Healthcare professionals and public health officials alone do not have the tools, knowledge, or capacity to address the root causes of all health and equity challenges, so collaboration with other sectors is essential. Many health departments already employ these strategies in their day-to-day operations, though they might not describe these strategies as HiAP.

Public health officials can use the HiAP framework detailed in our guide to create a multisector approach to disaster preparedness. While disasters have large-scale impacts on community health, safety, and well-being, they can also be inflection points to examine policies and practices, develop and deepen partnerships, engage the community around public health issues, and collect and use public health data to forge a healthier community.

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Each of the seven HiAP strategies can be integrated into disaster preparedness activities. The seven strategies include:

- Develop and form cross-sector collaborations
- Incorporate health into decision making
- Enhance workforce capacity
- Coordinate funding and investments
- Integrate research, evaluation, and data systems
- Synchronize communication and messaging
- Implement accountability structures

The Disaster Management Cycle aims to guide disaster management before, during, and after a disaster. During the four phases of

the disaster cycle, the model proposes specific actions that, when executed properly, can reduce loss of life and property and help expedite recovery efforts. These actions can be integrated into a HiAP framework. As such, our guide is organized using the four phases of the disaster management cycle: mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. Each section begins with a description of the disaster cycle activities that take place and the partners that could provide support during each phase.

The guide also provides:

- An introduction to HiAP
- Examples of how to implement the framework
- How preparedness activities map to the HiAP framework
- How one or more HiAP tools can be applied in each phase
- Worksheets for every stage of the response

Visit www.neha.org/hiap-preparedness-guide to view the guide and download the available worksheets.

Reference

World Health Organization. (2014). *Health in All Policies: Helsinki statement. Framework for country action*. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241506908>

Water Webinar Series



Image © Adobe Stock: pololia

In April, May, and June 2023, we offered a 4-part Water Webinar Series that highlighted recreational water illness, changes to the Model Aquatic Health Code (MAHC) from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and implementation of the new edition of the MAHC.

- The first webinar on April 27 explored what the latest national surveillance data tells us about the state of design, construction, operation, and management of U.S. public aquatic venues and underscored the need for the MAHC.
- The second webinar on May 11 provided a brief background on the MAHC and an overview of the recently released and updated edition of the MAHC. The presenters also highlighted expected changes to be addressed during the next update cycle.
- The third webinar on May 25 focused on the experiences of a health department in Colorado to implement new state regulations related to recreational aquatic facilities in response to the state's recent adoption of the MAHC. The presentation spotlighted the journey and lessons learned as this health department worked to implement new regulations.
- The fourth webinar on June 8 described our current understanding of the public health consequences associated with exposure to cyanobacteria harmful algal blooms (HABs) in freshwater. It also provided an overview of emerging issues related to HABs.

You can view full webinar descriptions, presenter biographies, and the recorded webinars at www.neha.org/water-webinar-series. 🌸