



## National Center for Environmental Health Division of Emergency and Environmental Health Services

### CDC Environmental Public Health Leadership Institute

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Environmental Public Health Leadership Institute (EPHLI) is a year-long leadership development program for environmental health practitioners. Fellows participate in two in-person workshops, complete assignments, and develop a systems-thinking project on an environmental health issue. Each year, about 30 practicing environmental public health professionals are admitted to the institute. CDC coordinates this through a partnership with the National Public Health Leadership Development Network.



### Why Is an Environmental Public Health Leadership Institute Needed?

The nation's environmental health workforce is facing many challenges, including recruitment shortfalls, inability to retain qualified staff, and impending retirements, to name a few. Leadership development within the profession has been identified as an important strategy to address these crucial workforce issues and strengthen the environmental public health system's ability to provide high-quality environmental health services in their communities.

EPHLI focuses on specific strategies for enhancing the leadership capabilities of environmental health practitioners, such as critical thinking and analysis (systems thinking), proactive leadership, the core functions of public health, and the improvement of environmental health services. These strategies improve the ability of graduates to perform—and support others in providing—such critical environmental health services for their communities as

- responding to natural disasters,
- preventing the spread of disease-carrying vectors,
- investigating environmental causes of waterborne and foodborne outbreaks, and
- ensuring the safety of food service establishments.

### EPHLI Strengthens Environmental Public Health: Success Stories

An environmental public health project is the cornerstone of the EPHLI. Fellows have strengthened public health with the projects they have chosen and implemented, as the following examples illustrate.

**Climate Change**—Adele Houghton helped address the problem that environmental public health objectives are often not included in local climate change planning, thus leading to missed opportunities to establish and work towards common goals. She proposed a project to both CDC's Global Climate Change program and the Austin Climate Protection Program to address this problem by bringing public health professionals into the local climate change planning process.



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## EPHLI, Continued

As a result, the groups are working together to integrate environmental public health indicators into the climate protection program's surveillance activities and identifying local climate actions that also achieve public health benefits. Adele's project was highlighted in the April 2009 issue of the *Journal of Environmental Health*.

**Environmental Health Network**—Lisa Conti recognized the need for a network to help environmental health directors build relationships and create a national identity for state-based environmental health programs. Similar networks existed for directors of other public health programs, but environmental health professionals had no such affiliate group. The State Environmental Health Directors (SEHD) is now a recognized affiliate of the Association for State and Territorial Health Officials. SEHD's regular meetings provide a meaningful forum for directors of environmental health programs to strategize around common threats and opportunities, network, and share lessons learned.



State Environmental Health Directors  
(SEHD)

**Workforce Improvement**—Timothy Murphy and Jeffrey Neistadt chose to address the hiring qualifications for local environmental health practitioners because the qualifications for many such positions are being downgraded. They analyzed the competencies gained by participating in accredited environmental health academic programs. Their project provided the basis for a guidance document published by the National Association of Local Boards of Health, *Board of Health Recommendations for Hiring Qualified Environmental Health Practitioners*. The document conveys the benefits of employing graduates of accredited environmental health programs and offers hiring tools for local health boards, which often play a role in local health department staffing.



### What's New for EPHLI?

CDC and former fellows have established an EPHLI Alumni Network to continue engaging fellows in environmental health practice leadership issues. The purpose of the network is to create an alumni-led forum for sharing and developing strategies to address specific issues facing environmental health practitioners, such as workforce issues and the role of environmental health practitioners in sustainability initiatives.

### Where Can I Get More Information About EPHLI?

For more information about EPHLI, the fellows and mentors, and the fellows' final projects, visit the EPHLI Web site (<http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs/EPHLI/>) or contact Captain John Sarisky in CDC's Environmental Health Services Branch, National Center for Environmental Health ([JSarisky@cdc.gov](mailto:JSarisky@cdc.gov)).

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