

Direct from CDC

Environmental Health Services Branch

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Enhancing and Revitalizing Environmental Public Health

Editor's note: NEHA strives to provide up-to-date and relevant information on environmental health and to build partnerships in the profession. In pursuit of these goals, we feature a column from the Environmental Health Services Branch (EHSB) of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in every issue of the Journal.

In this column, EHSB and guest authors from across CDC will highlight a variety of concerns, opportunities, challenges, and successes that we all share in environmental public health.

EHSB's objective is to strengthen the role of state, local, and national environmental health programs and professionals to anticipate, identify, and respond to adverse environmental exposures and the consequences of these exposures for human health. The services being developed through EHSB include access to topical, relevant, and scientific information; consultation; and assistance to environmental health specialists, sanitarians, and environmental health professionals and practitioners.

Rob Blake is chief of the Environmental Health Services Branch.

The conclusions in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of CDC.

The overarching goal of the Environmental Health Services Branch (EHSB) at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is to enhance and revitalize environmental public health to address a range of environmental health issues. The branch strengthens the roles of local, state, tribal, and national environmental health programs and professionals to better anticipate, identify, and respond to adverse environmental exposures and their consequences for human health.

EHSB staff members work with environmental public health stakeholders in six areas identified in here (see Figure 1) and in CDC's *National Strategy to Revitalize Environmental Public Health Services*. For more information on the strategy, visit www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs/Strategy.htm.

Building Capacity

EHSB funds cooperative agreements to help local, state, and tribal health departments develop effective state-of-the-art environmental public health programs. Grantees implement interventions addressing issues related to inadequate environmental health services (i.e., services involving water quality, air quality, waste management, or vector control) that can potentially contribute to health disparities in the communities they serve. Get information about grantees and their products at www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs/CapacityBuilding.

EHSB's new Global Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Team works with partners in the Latin American and Caribbean region to improve water supply systems. EHSB encourages the use of the Water Safety Plan (WSP) methodology promoted by the World Health Organization to assess water supply systems, identify and control risks, and to strengthen

management plans of water supply systems. The team also works on sustainability evaluation and sanitation research.

Supporting Research

The Environmental Health Services Network (EHS-Net) exemplifies EHSB's support for research. EHS-Net is a collaborative forum of environmental health specialists whose mission is to improve environmental health. The network allows environmental health specialists to collaborate with epidemiologists and laboratorians to identify and prevent environmental factors contributing to foodborne illnesses, waterborne illnesses, and disease outbreaks. For more information about EHS-Net studies, visit www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs/EHSNet.

Fostering Leadership

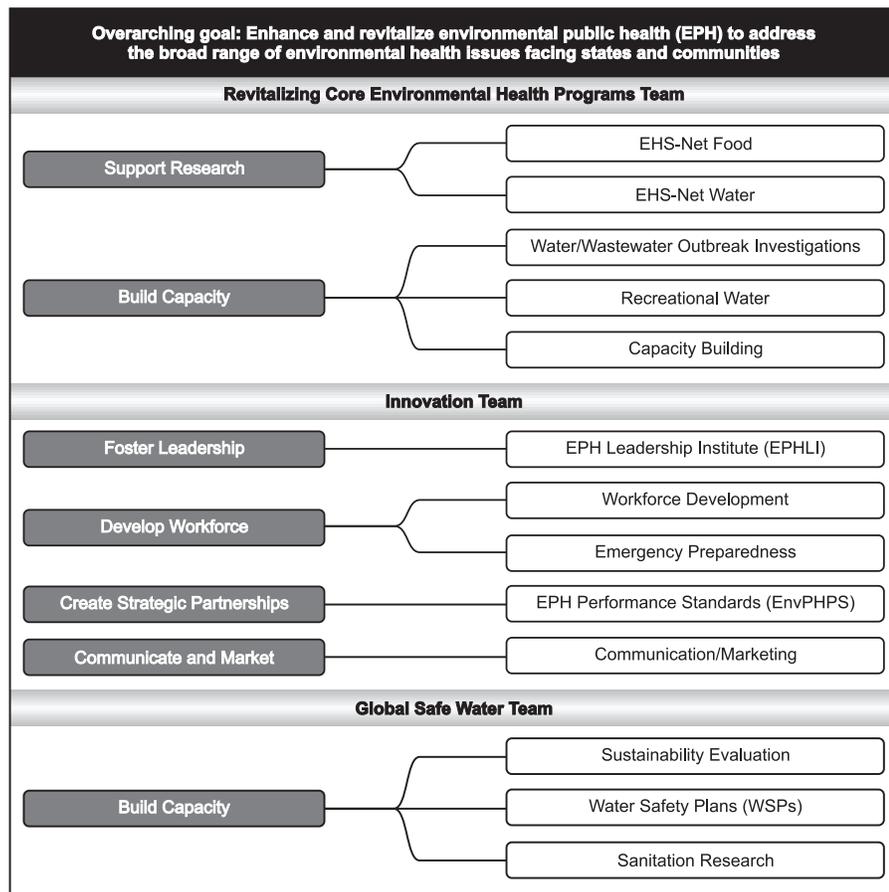
The Environmental Public Health Leadership Institute (EPHLI) is a year-long program of seminars, workshops, special projects, and individual studies. The institute strengthens the country's environmental public health system by improving the leadership capabilities of local, state, and tribal environmental public health specialists. The fourth cohort graduated from EPHLI in February and the fifth cohort began its year of study. Download graduates' final projects at www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs/EPHLI.

Communicating and Marketing

The EHSB Web site is a major channel for new tools and information. EHSB is stepping up efforts to post program information to the Web site, which now includes 10 major content areas. Visit the site at www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs.

FIGURE 1

Major Projects in the Environmental Health Services Branch Aligned with the Six Goals



From *A National Strategy to Revitalize Environmental Public Health Services* (www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs/Strategy.htm). The branch is organized into three teams: Revitalizing Core Environmental Health Programs, Innovation, and Global Safe Water. Many branch projects align with more than one goal; for this illustration, projects are aligned with only one goal. Several environmental health areas are not currently staffed by the branch: community environmental health, built environment, healthy homes, climate change, and emergency response. As resources become available in the future, the branch hopes to expand more activities in these gap areas.

EHSB is working with the NEHA Environmental Health Marketing Committee on interactive webinars to improve the ability of local and state environmental health programs to market EH to their stakeholders. These webinars are archived online at www.sanitarians.org/resources-ehm.htm.

Authors from EHSB publish this monthly column in the *Journal of Environmental Health*. Read the columns at www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs/Publications/JEH_EHSB_Columns.htm.

Developing the Workforce

The Emergency and Terrorism Preparedness for Environmental Health Practitioners Web site is a clearinghouse of information resources related to emergency and

terrorism preparedness for environmental health practitioners. Access the site at www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs/ETP.

Environmental Health Training in Emergency Response (EHTER)—Introductory Level is a 10-module comprehensive pilot training that focuses on key environmental health issues and challenges for emergency response. The EHTER course was developed and piloted at several sites, and an EHTER Train-the-Trainer course has been developed and offered twice in 2008. For more information about EHTER, visit www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs/Resources/EHTER.htm.

The Environmental Public Health Performance Standards (EnvPHPS), now in development, can be used to assess local, state, and

tribal capability to perform the 10 essential services of environmental public health at all levels. EnvPHPS implementation across the country at the state, tribal, and local levels, will help NCEH build capacity, consistency, and accountability within and across the nation's environmental public health system. The EnvPHPS are a potential first step to accreditation of programs. Find out more about the standards at www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs/EnvPHPS.

EHSB is working with the Association of Environmental Health Academic Programs (AEHAP) to address the shortage of environmental health professionals and the importance of accredited programs. Read more about AEHAP at www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs/Topics/workforce.htm or www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs/Docs/JEH/2006/June_2006_Herring.pdf.

Creating Strategic Partnerships

EHSB is collaborating with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, in partnership with state and local governments, to use a community-centered approach to build healthy communities. Find information about the collaboration at www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs/CEHA/collaboration.htm.

For More Information

For more information on EHSB, visit www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs, call the branch office at 770-488-7476, or send an e-mail to ehsb@cdc.gov.

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