

Application Period Open for the National Environmental Public Health Internship Program

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National Environmental
Public Health
Internship Program

In partnership with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Water, Food, and Environmental Health Services Branch, the National Environmental Health Association (NEHA)

is currently accepting applications for the National Environmental Public Health Internship Program (NEPHIP) to support 22 environmental health student internships during summer 2021. The application is open exclusively to environmental health students that are currently enrolled in a program accredited by the National Environmental Health Science and Protection Accreditation Council. In addition, the application is also open to local, state, territorial, and tribal health departments that are interested in hosting an intern.

The purpose of NEPHIP is to encourage environmental health students to consider careers at local, state, or tribal environmental public health departments following graduation. Through this internship program, students will be exposed to the exciting career opportunities, benefits, and challenges of working with environmental public health agencies throughout the U.S., and the program is beneficial to local, state, and tribal environmental public health departments by providing qualified students who will contribute to the department's work at no cost to the department. NEPHIP is supported through a cooperative agreement with CDC (CDC-RFA-OT18-1802).

NEHA's role in the program is to:

1. solicit applications from eligible environmental health departments and select locations based on established application criteria;
2. solicit applications from eligible environmental health students and select interns based on established application criteria; and
3. match selected interns with selected environmental health departments based on geolocation preferences, interests, and professional goals that align with health department opportunities.

The application period for health departments and students is now open and will close on January 22, 2021. Selected students will receive a base stipend of \$6,000 (\$600/week) for undergraduate students and \$8,000 (\$800/week) for graduate students to



A National Environmental Public Health Internship Program intern conducts shellfish inspections under the guidance of environmental health professionals at the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation in Anchorage, Alaska. Photo courtesy of the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation.

complete a 10-week internship. Information regarding student and health department eligibility and additional considerations, as well as the applications and application checklists, can be found at www.neha.org/nephip. NEHA's NEPHIP web page also includes 2021 program guidelines and past intern success stories.

NEHA FUNdraising Events for December

By Lexi Nally (atnally@neha.org)

- **Colorado Gives Day 2020:** We are excited to announce our participation in Colorado Gives Day on December 8, 2020. Support us in reaching our goal of \$10,000 and Colorado Gives guarantees a multiplied impact! By contributing to this campaign, you are supporting the National Environmental Health Association/American Academy of Sanitarians (NEHA/AAS) Scholarship Fund directly, making it possible for dedicated environmental health students to complete their programs with less debt and feel empowered to get started in the environmental health profession following graduation. Mark your calendars for December 8, the day that will multiply your impact and support our NEHA/AAS Scholarship Fund!
- **AmazonSmile Gives Back:** One simple way to support NEHA during the holidays is to shop online through AmazonSmile and choose "National Environmental Health Association" as your charitable organization. With every purchase you make through AmazonSmile, Amazon will donate 0.5% of your eligible sales back to us!
- **Dear NEHA, Letters From Our Supporters:** Check out our new donor blog to read the inspirations of our supporters who continue to give back to us as their professional organization. Become enlightened by their thoughtful words and unwavering commitment as they endorse the advancement of environmental health. View the blog at www.neha.org/membership-communities/get-involved/day-in-life.

For more information on these events, please visit www.neha.org/about-neha/donate.

NEHA Releases Second COVID-19 Environmental Health Workforce Needs Assessment

On November 5, 2020, NEHA released the preliminary findings report from its nationwide environmental health workforce needs assessment in response to COVID-19. The needs assessment was conducted between July 15 and August 31, 2020. The aim of the assessment was to collect primary data in support of efforts to assess environmental health workforce activities and identify needs in response to COVID-19.

Information about the survey was sent to approximately 6,800 individuals via several e-mail marketing endeavors and had a reach of approximately 1,200 individuals via three social media platforms. In total, 767 individuals completed the survey with over one half of respondents (52%) working at local environmental health programs.

The findings support that environmental health practitioners, many of whom are employed at small local agencies, are actively supporting COVID-19 response and recovery. Their contributions

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are felt in safely reopening and restoring the economy, emergency operation centers, contact tracing, and communications efforts, in addition to their customary responsibilities. They have been tasked to take on new roles and responsibilities that sometimes place them at risk of harm from the disease.

The most frequently identified issue caused by the COVID-19 pandemic was staff shortages (51%), followed by lack of guidance (48%), insufficient training (46%), and budget/resource shortages (46%). An overwhelming number of respondents reported feeling more emotionally exhausted (74%) and worn out at the end of the working day (67%). A high percentage of local (60%), state (64%), and tribal (67%) environmental health programs reported an insufficient number of staff to conduct the work needed.

A comprehensive report of the assessment will be published at a later date. To view the assessment, as well as the first needs assessment conducted in late March 2020, please visit <https://emergency-neha.org/covid19/eh-workforce-reports>.

NEHA Announces the Launch of the COVID-19 Early Care and Education Collaborative

Meeting the urgent needs resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) has awarded support for a collaborative of public health partners to work in coordination to advance environmental health capacity to implement COVID-19 guidance and safe practices in early care and education (ECE) facilities. The partner organizations include the Children's Environmental Health Network, Association of State and Territorial Health Officials, National Association of County and City Health Officials, National Center for Healthy Housing, and NEHA.

Environmental health practices play an important role in reducing the spread of COVID-19 in our communities, specifically environmental health practices around sanitation, disinfection, food safety, and other related considerations for the ECE environment. The need for guidance on cleaning practices is especially necessary in ECE facilities where many children spend a majority of their active hours during the day. Children at ECE facilities can also be subject to an increased risk of exposure to COVID-19 and other environmental health hazards. Children are more susceptible to environmental health hazards than adults due to a smaller body weight, underdeveloped brain and immune systems, and an increased tendency to put their hands in their mouths. Resources developed from this project will provide ECE providers and health departments with the ability to improve environmental health for children during COVID-19, supporting their critical roles in protecting children's health.

"Environmental health professionals play a critical assurance role in the health and safety of families at this time in our nation's history," said Dr. David Dyjack, NEHA executive director. "We are honored to facilitate this collaborative that will provide tools and resources to the environmental health workforce in support of our efforts to ensure every child reaches their full potential free from recognized risks in the environment."

A full press release can be viewed at www.neha.org/neha-announces-launch-covid-19-early-care-and-education-collaborative to learn more about the partner organizations and the importance of this effort.

NEHA Awarded Retail Food Safety Association Collaborative Cooperative Agreement

A recent press release from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) announced the award of three Retail Food Safety Association Collaborative Cooperative Agreements to the Association for Food and Drug Officials (AFDO), National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO), and NEHA. The three organizations represent state, local, tribal, and territorial (SLTT) retail food safety programs. The Conference for Food Protection (CFP) is also a sub-awardee under this cooperative agreement program.

The total funding for the cooperative agreement program is \$1.25 million. The amount awarded to each association varies based on the expected outcomes of their respective cooperative agreements. These cooperative agreements directly support FDA's efforts to modernize the nation's retail food protection program under the New Era of Smarter Food Safety (www.fda.gov/food/new-era-smarter-food-safety).

"We want to work with stakeholders to reimagine how we approach retail food safety. We are serious about bending the curve of foodborne illness in this country by reducing the number of illnesses. To do that, we must do more to modernize and help ensure the safety of foods sold at restaurants and other retail establishments," stated Frank Yiannas, deputy FDA commissioner for food policy and response.

These cooperative agreements will help FDA to better leverage their national association partners to assist SLTT retail food programs in efforts to reduce the occurrence of foodborne illness risk factors, implement and attain conformance with the Voluntary National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards (Retail Program Standards), and advance a nationally integrated food safety system. As part of the 2-year cooperative agreement program, AFDO, NEHA, NACCHO, and CFP will work collaboratively with FDA to achieve the following national retail program objectives:

- Identify, assess, and promote industry and regulatory intervention strategies designed to reduce foodborne illness risk factor occurrence.
- Leverage the associations to enhance Retail Program Standards technical support to SLTTs through a multiplier effect.
- Assess and promote greater application of risk-based inspection methods by SLTT retail regulatory jurisdictions.
- Develop and promote use of an FDA *Food Code* adoption, implementation, and sustainability toolkit.
- Develop and implement a national strategy for promoting *Food Code* adoption.

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- Enhance utilization of foodborne illness outbreak investigation resources and best practices by SLTT retail regulatory jurisdictions.
- Promote and connect available resources among retail food safety stakeholders.

Information about this collaborative and NEHA's involvement will be forthcoming at www.neha.org, as well as in the upcoming January/February 2021 *Journal of Environmental Health*.

New Environmental Health and Land Reuse Certificate Program From NEHA and ATSDR



Beginning in 2016, ATSDR and NEHA launched a partnership to create a free online course with the goal of building capacity within communities to help remediate and redevelop many of the brownfields around the country. Brownfields are land reuse sites often contaminated by harmful chemicals or redeveloped without proper environmental oversight, such as former gas stations, manufactured gas plants, factories, dry cleaners, and abandoned properties. Due to their potentially hazardous status, brownfields can lead to harmful exposures in humans while accentuating, and often exacerbating, socioeconomic disparities within communities. These sites, therefore, have unique funding eligibilities and regulatory steps for developmental processes.

ATSDR has been working diligently with brownfields since the mid-1990s, and in 2006, launched the National Land Reuse Health Program that focuses on incorporating community health considerations into land revitalization activities. This program promotes a well-rounded, healthful approach to redevelopment; measures changes in community health; encourages community involvement in public policy; and improves ways to discuss health and environmental risks. Collaborating with NEHA to transport ATSDR's expertise to an online learning space, the Environmental Health and Land Reuse (EHLR) Certificate Program provides all the information needed to build "healthfields" or other health-focused redevelopments in communities.

Based on a NEHA survey, environmental professionals working in local health departments (LHDs) reported varying levels of education in environmental health and land reuse/redevelopment in the areas of risk assessment, risk communication, epidemiology, land reuse and redevelopment, and toxicology. Among LHD respondents who indicated working on land reuse/brownfields issues, almost 75% indicated having either no formal education or only continuing education courses related to land reuse and/or brownfields.

The EHLR Certificate Program was created to fill that knowledge gap. This holistic training course consists of six modules:

- Prerequisite: Introduction to the Environmental Health and Land Reuse Certificate Program
- Module 1: Engaging With Your Community
- Module 2: Evaluating Environmental and Health Risks
- Module 3: Communicating Environmental and Health Risks
- Module 4: Redesigning With Health in Mind
- Module 5: Measuring Success

The wealth of knowledge contained in these modules will provide environmental or health professionals the information, procedures, and resources needed to identify, cleanup, and redevelop land reuse sites.

Participants can receive either a Community Engagement and Risk Communication Certificate upon completion of the prerequisite and modules 1 and 3 (aimed at public health professionals such as nurses) or an Environmental Health and Land Reuse Certificate upon completion of the prerequisite and all five modules (all audiences).

The course can be accessed with a MyNEHA account through NEHA's online E-Learning (www.neha.org/e-learning). Please visit www.neha.org/ehlr for more information about the EHLR Certificate Program.

NEHA Announces Virtual FDA Course Catalog

NEHA is pleased to announce the enhanced delivery of its extensive FDA course catalog on a new, virtual learning platform. The new virtual FDA trainings will take the place of the previously held face-to-face trainings for fiscal year 2021. In partnership with AFDO and FDA, state, local, and tribal regulatory agency participants can anticipate engaging food safety courses delivered through a new and dynamic online delivery. The courses are free to qualifying applicants.

Courses delivered by NEHA cover topics on temporary food establishments, plan review, and special processes at retail. Courses offered by AFDO cover topics on managing retail food safety and risk-based inspection methods in retail establishments. NEHA credential holders can earn continuing education contact hours by participating in these courses.

More information about these courses can be found at www.neha.org/national-retail-food-program-courses-0.

Online Recordings Available for the Data and Environmental Health Best Practices Webinar Series From NEHA

From October 15–November 4, 2020, NEHA hosted the Data and Environmental Health Best Practices Webinar Series. The webinar series provided attendees with the opportunity to build foundational knowledge on open data to be applied at their environmental health agencies. The four-part webinar series featured top open data experts and dove into open data, data management, and data standards for environmental health.

Webinars offered in this series included:

- Best Practices for Open Data,
- How to Manage Your Technology for Better Data Outcomes,
- Communities Using Data, and
- Data Standards and Environmental Health.

Recordings of all webinars can now be viewed for free on NEHA's website at www.neha.org/eh-topics/informatics/data-and-environmental-health-best-practices-webinar-series. 🎧