

NEHA NEWS

Newly Revised National Environmental Health Internship Program Provides More Opportunities to Prepare Future Environmental Health Workforce

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The environmental public health workforce is critical to ensure the health and safety of our nation. Local health departments employ approximately 14,500 full-time environmental public health workers across the nation, which is the second largest segment of the public health workforce after nursing and excluding administrative support. Environmental public health professionals are critical to public health as they strive daily to deliver essential services to ensure the safety of the water we drink, the food we eat, the air we breathe, and the neighborhoods we work and play in, to name a few. Maintaining a pipeline of empowered, educated, and prepared individuals for this workforce is vital to the provision of essential services and protects our communities from the health risks associated with environmental hazards, threats, and diseases (National Association of County and City Health Officials, 2020).

The National Environmental Public Health Internship Program (NEPHIP) is the National Environmental Health Association's (NEHA) premier development program for the environmental public health workforce. The program offers 400-hr paid internship opportunities for undergraduate and graduate environmental health students with qualified state, tribal, local, and territorial (STLT) environmental public health agencies. Through the program, interns can meet internship or practicum degree requirements, earn credit hours for required coursework, bolster their academic scholarship, and strengthen their work experience. Host health departments are provided dedicated intern support to start, pilot, and/or reinvigorate projects or programs and offer fresh and diverse perspectives.

This workforce initiative supports our goals to develop qualified applicant pipelines to help meet current and future workforce needs for environmental health professionals across the nation. The program also encourages students to consider careers in governmental environmental public health following graduation. According to a 2019 study, approximately one quarter of the environmental health professionals surveyed plan to retire within the next 5 years (Gerding et al., 2019). This finding shows the need to prepare environmental health students with real-world skills and experiences to help fill this gap.

NEHA originally developed the NEPHIP internship in 2015, with funding support from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). To date, the program has supported more than 195 internships in 110 health departments across 38 states and territories. In 2022, we significantly expanded and revised the program to include new fall and spring cohorts, which now provide year-round student internship opportunities. The enhanced program now supports more environmental health students than



A National Environmental Public Health Internship Program (NEPHIP) intern placed traps for mosquito surveillance. Although the summer 2022 NEPHIP internship was virtual, the internship host mentor was able to send traps to the intern for mosquito surveillance in the intern's town of residence for the internship. Photo courtesy of the NEPHIP intern.

ever, with up to 50 internship placements available per year. We recognize the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion within the environmental health workforce. These principles guide our marketing considerations and the intern selection criteria for the program, which work to promote equity, diversity, and broad geographic representation among our cohorts.

The summer 2022 session supported 41 internships, nearly double the size of any previous cohort. Although internships for this session remained primarily virtual due to the ongoing pandemic, interns and host health departments made the most of their experiences and successfully completed projects in a variety of areas such as mosquito surveillance, food safety, lead exposure prevention, and recreational and drinking water safety.

In addition to exploring the many environmental health programmatic areas, interns were encouraged to explore how climate change, health equity, and environmental justice concerns were associated with the environmental health hazard or issue being addressed by their projects. For example, one summer 2022 project sought to understand and identify potential food safety burdens or disparities experienced across different neighborhoods by comparing food safety violations and enteric disease cases with socioeconomic variables like race and education using ArcGIS. In reflecting on the experience, the intern stated, "I feel like I have learned a lot and I'm really excited that the work I completed [during the internship] can be used even after I'm long gone."

As the summer came to a close, we recruited our first-ever fall cohort with the participation of 10 students and environmental public health departments from across the country. Within this cohort, two interns were able to participate in fully in-person experiences—our first since the program went virtual in 2020. In 2022 we enhanced many offerings for the interns, including the opportunity to participate in the NEHA Annual Educational Conference & Exhibition, a professional development workshop hosted by us, and career mentorship sessions with experienced environmental health professionals working at STLT health departments.

As we further develop the program, we will continue to bring together dedicated environmental health students and health departments. More information about the program is available at www.neha.org/nephip. NEPHIP is supported through a cooperative agreement with CDC (CDC-RFA-OT18-1802).

References

- Gerding, J.A., Landeen, E., Kelly, K., Whitehead, S., Dyjack, D.T., Sarisky, J., & Brooks, B. (2019). Uncovering environmental health: An initial assessment of the profession's health department workforce and practice. *Journal of Environmental Health*, 81(10), 24–33. <https://www.neha.org/Images/resources/JEH6.19-Feature-Uncovering-EH.pdf>
- National Association of County and City Health Officials. (2020). *2019 national profile of local health departments*. https://www.naccho.org/uploads/downloadable-resources/Programs/Public-Health-Infrastructure/NACCHO_2019_Profile_final.pdf

NEHA Government Affairs Updates

By Doug Farquhar (dfarquhar@neha.org)

The NEHA Government Affairs program works to represent and advocate for environmental health professionals and to inform policy makers on the importance of a well-supported and well-funded workforce. We highlight our recent activities in this update. Visit the Government Affairs webpage at www.neha.org/advocacy to access all our blogs and webinars, legislative actions, letters and sign-ons, and policy and position statements.

Blogs

In November 2022 we posted two blogs that explored specific state ballot measures related to environmental health and the results of the U.S. midterm elections on environmental health. On November 8, 2022, voters in the U.S. decided on 133 state ballot measures. Of these measures, several related to the environment and health, including measures on water, climate change, environmental projects, healthcare, and cannabis. The first November blog highlights a few of these measures. The second blog discusses the 2022 midterm election results with an emphasis on what the results mean for environmental health.

In December 2022 we posted two blogs that focused on the fiscal year 2023 appropriations bills for federal government agencies including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC),

Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR), Food and Drug Administration (FDA), U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA). The 12 appropriations bills released by the U.S. Congress included \$800 billion in nondefense funding, a \$68 billion increase over 2022. This funding is the highest level ever requested for nondefense programs.

You can explore these blogs and others at www.neha.org/government-affairs-blog.

Webinars

You can find an archive of past Government Affairs webinars at www.neha.org/advocacy-webinars. The following webinars were offered in September and November 2022.

- **Food Safety Legislation Policy and Trends:** During the 2022 legislative session, policy makers made substantive changes in the manner food is prepared and sold in the U.S., and Congress oversaw and funded the food safety efforts at CDC, FDA, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). This webinar reviewed the laws passed and appropriations funded regarding food safety at state and federal levels.
- **2022 Midterm Election Impact:** This webinar broke down the results of the 2022 midterm election. In total, one third of the U.S. Senate, all of the U.S. House of Representatives, 6,279 state legislative seats, and 36 state governor positions were up for election in 2022. The webinar explored how these election results will change Congress and the states, and how that could impact environmental health.

Finally, our Government Affairs program participated in a food safety sharing session on microenterprise home kitchen operations hosted by the National Association of County and City Health Officials and CDC in December 2022. A microenterprise home kitchen operation is a type of food facility that is operated by the resident of a private home. Food can be stored, prepared, and served to customers at these operations, similar to a restaurant. This webinar focused on the various laws nationwide that permit microenterprise home kitchen operations and similar cottage food operations, as well as discussed the challenges these operations pose for local retail food regulatory programs. A recording of the webinar can be accessed at <https://bit.ly/3iQpa6z>.

Support Letters

We submitted support letters to the U.S. House of Representatives Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies in November 2022. The letters supported an increase in funding for 1) the National Center for Environmental Health within CDC to \$311.85 million and 2) the Office of Lead Hazard Control and Healthy Homes within HUD to \$400 million. You can view all our letters and sign-ons at www.neha.org/letters.

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Preconference Offerings at the 2023 AEC

The NEHA 2023 Annual Educational Conference (AEC) & Exhibition—to be held on July 31–August 3 in New Orleans, Louisiana—will include a full preconference schedule offering attendees the opportunity to take a credential review course or attend a workshop or training on a variety of topics. More details,

updates, and registration information can be found at www.neha.org/aec-preconference.

Certified Professional–Food Safety (CP-FS) Credential Review Course (July 29–30)

This 2-day refresher course is designed to enhance your preparation for the NEHA CP-FS credential exam and will cover exam content areas. Participants are expected to have prior food safety knowledge and training equal to the eligibility requirements to sit for the exam. The instructor will be available during and after the course for questions. There will be the opportunity to take the paper exam on-site at the AEC. An additional application and fee are required to take the exam and candidates must apply online. Please allow 6 weeks to process applications. *Fee: \$449 for NEHA members and \$549 for nonmembers. Registration includes the CP-FS Study Package (CP-FS Study Guide (4th edition) and CP-FS flash cards).*

Registered Environmental Health Specialist/Registered Sanitarian (REHS/RS) Credential Review Course (July 29–31)

This 2.5-day refresher course is designed to enhance your preparation for the NEHA REHS/RS credential exam and will cover exam content areas. Participants are expected to have a solid foundation of environmental health knowledge and training equal to the eligibility requirements to sit for the exam. There will be the opportunity to take the paper exam on-site at the AEC. An additional application and fee are required to take the exam and candidates must apply online. Please allow 6 weeks to process applications. *Fee: \$549 for NEHA members and \$649 for nonmembers. Registration includes the REHS/RS Study Guide (5th edition).*

Affiliate Leadership Workshop (July 31)

This one half-day workshop is designed just for NEHA affiliate leaders to collaborate, learn, and network. The session will explore environmental health legislation, leadership with a shared purpose, enhancing partnerships and linkages with NEHA, and much more. *Fee: No cost but preregistration is required.*

Communication: Influencing Inspection Outcomes (July 31)

When you walk away from an inspection or audit, do you have assurances owners, operators, and employees have a greater understanding of environmental health and how to partner in protection of their communities? This session will examine why communication in environmental health is important to positive inspection outcomes. *Fee: No cost but preregistration is required.*

Council for the Model Aquatic Health Code: Certified Pool Operator (CPO) Fusion Course (July 30)

This 1-day CPO Fusion Course prepares attendees to be certified or recertified as a CPO. Attendees will complete one half of the course online at their own pace and then will attend the 1-day course at the AEC for certification. Registration is due by July 10 to provide attendees with ample time to complete the online portion of the course. *Fee: \$350.*

Council for the Model Aquatic Health Code: Certified Public Health Pool Inspector Course (July 31)

This new, 1-day certification course from the Council for the Model Aquatic Health Code is designed just for public health officials. Based on the Model Aquatic Health Code from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the course provides the information needed to confidently inspect commercial pools. This course is a pilot offering and attendees will be able to provide input to guide finalization of the course. *Fee: \$200.*

Environmental Health and Land Reuse (EHLR) Immersion Training (July 29–31)

This interactive 2.5-day training aims to increase the skills of the environmental health workforce to engage in land reuse and redevelopment. The training takes a deeper dive into the first three modules of our original EHLR Basic Training, which focus on community engagement, evaluation, and risk communication. Participants will earn 20 continuing education contact hours after completion of the training.

Prior to this training, attendees must complete modules 1, 2, and 3 of the EHLR Certificate Training at www.neha.org/ehlr. *Fee: \$25 for NEHA members and \$50 for nonmembers.*

NEHA and FDA National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards Self-Assessment and Verification Audit Workshop (July 29–31)

This workshop is designed to provide participants with an overview of the National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards criteria and an in-depth understanding of the self-assessment and verification audit processes, worksheets, and forms. Participants should be program managers or directly responsible for conducting program self-assessments and preparing for verification audits. *Fee: \$140.*

Tools for Working Better, Smarter, Cheaper as You Utilize Data and Planning to Ensure Environmental Health Program Success: A Workshop for Current and Aspiring Environmental Health Leaders (July 31)

Does your environmental health program have all the funding, resources, and support needed to meet the needs of your community? Are you and other staff able to work to your full potential? Do you possess the data or evidence that indicate your programs are effective and efficient? If not, this one half-day workshop can offer tools helpful in achieving program and personal goals. *Fee: No cost but preregistration is required.*

Available Scholarships to Support Environmental Health Students

We are now accepting applications from environmental health students for the 2023 National Environmental Health Association (NEHA)/American Academy of Sanitarians (AAS) Scholarships. We hope to positively contribute to the future of environmental health and encourage an early commitment by students to pursue careers in environmental health through these scholarships. We believe that structured education at the undergraduate and graduate levels is necessary to foster a growing workforce and to promote successful professional development.

We established a scholarship fund in 1984 that began with a gift of \$1,000 from Dr. A. Harry Bliss, former NEHA president, along with personal donations from other board members. Because of their strong belief in scholarship programs, AAS also made a financial donation to the program, which allowed us to increase the number of undergraduate scholarships awarded. In 1996, NEHA and AAS decided to jointly fund the scholarships and called them the NEHA/AAS Scholarships. In 2020, the boards of both organizations voted to name one of the undergraduate scholarships in honor of Dr. Sheila Davidson Pressley. In 2021, the second undergraduate scholarship was named in honor

of Dr. Carolyn Hester Harvey. These esteemed individuals served as champions for students and academic excellence throughout their impressive careers.

Recently, the NEHA Board of Directors approved an increase in the amount of scholarship funding awarded. Funding for the scholarships is continually obtained from donations, proceeds from association fundraisers, and NEHA and AAS budget commitments. We encourage you to donate to the scholarship to help us achieve our goal to increase the scholarship amounts awarded next year. You can learn more and donate at www.neha.org/donate.

There are three scholarships available:

1. Dr. Sheila Davidson Pressley Undergraduate Scholarship (\$2,650)
2. Dr. Carolyn Hester Harvey Undergraduate Scholarship (\$2,650)
3. Graduate Scholarship (\$3,750)

Beyond helping students to pay for tuition, fees, or the rent, the scholarships can ease up the pressure to enable students to enjoy their last semesters of school, bring focus back to classes rather than bank accounts, and allow students to pursue an unpaid internship or volunteer opportunity.

Applications are due April 15, 2023. Students will be notified of their application status by June 1, 2023. Learn more and apply at www.neha.org/scholarships.

Invest in Yourself With the NEHA/AAS Scholarship

You are studying to contribute to the health and safety of your community. Apply today for the National Environmental Health Association (NEHA)/American Academy of Sanitarians (AAS) Scholarship and let us help you reach your goals!

Students enrolled in a college or university with a dedicated curriculum in environmental health sciences are invited to apply for the following:

- Dr. Sheila Davidson Pressley Undergraduate Scholarship
- Dr. Carolyn Hester Harvey Undergraduate Scholarship
- NEHA/AAS Graduate Scholarship

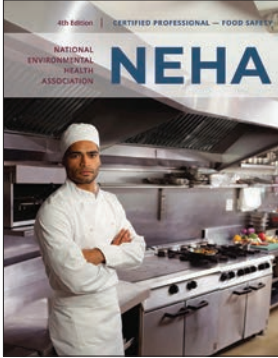
Application deadline: April 15, 2023

neha.org/scholarships



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NEHA CP-FS Study Materials Now Available in Print and Electronic Versions



The NEHA *Certified Professional—Food Safety (CP-FS) Study Guide* (4th ed.) was updated in 2022 to the current FDA *Food Code* and includes information and requirements from the Food Safety Modernization Act. It was developed by retail professionals to help prepare candidates for the NEHA CP-FS credential exam with in-depth content, an examination blueprint, practice test, and many helpful appendices. The

study guide is the go-to resource for students of food safety and food safety professionals in both regulatory agencies and industry.

A CP-FS is an individual who possesses the knowledge and skills necessary to ensure safe food in any retail environment as a quality assurance or quality control manager, facility manager, food-safe chemical supplier, or regulatory inspector/investigator. The CP-FS credential is well respected throughout the industry and is highly valued by employers when hiring food safety professionals.

We are excited to announce that the *CP-FS Study Guide* is now available in paperback and electronic versions. The e-book can be purchased via Google Play Books at \$199 for members and \$229 for nonmembers. NEHA members can access the discounted rate by adding the *CP-FS Study Guide* e-book to their cart in our bookstore and checking out to receive a promo code via email that allows them to purchase the book via Google Play at the members-only price.

We also offer over 195 flash cards to quiz you on the information presented in the CP-FS credential exam. Flash cards are strategically designed to enhance and encourage active recall and we have updated our flash cards to include pictures to help jog your memory as you study. You can now purchase the flash cards from our bookstore in either print or electronic versions. Both are available for \$24.99.

Learn more about the CP-FS credential and our study resources at www.neha.org/cpfs-credential.

Nearly 2,500 Food Safety Experts Shared Their Needs

In early 2022 we launched a one-of-a-kind comprehensive national census—the Retail Food Safety Regulatory Training Needs Assessment—to identify strengths and knowledge gaps in the retail food safety regulatory community to better direct scarce training and education resources and identify where training should be developed or modified. Specifically, we aimed to:

- Determine the degree of exposure retail food regulatory professionals have to key content knowledge areas.
- Discover strengths and gaps between exposure to content and the working needs of the regulatory community.

We are pleased to report that we had an excellent response rate and received 2,443 qualified survey responses representing the regulatory workforce from across the regulatory community, as well as at different jurisdiction levels (Table 1).

TABLE 1

Jurisdictions of Survey Respondents From the Retail Food Safety Regulatory Training Needs Assessment (N = 2,443)

Jurisdiction	Respondents # (%)
Federal	54 (2.2)
State	473 (19.4)
Local	1,862 (76.2)
Tribal	37 (1.5)
U.S. Territory	9 (0.4)

The complete survey findings will be shared this summer and will be used to help bolster educational resources, reduce knowledge gaps in the profession, and improve overall workforce capabilities.

Thank you to every retail food safety professional who participated. The honest and thorough feedback we received showcases the commitment of our workforce to the future of regulatory retail food safety.

To learn more about the assessment and to check back for findings this summer, visit our needs assessment webpage at www.neha.org/retail-grants-needs-assessment.

NEHA Staff Profile

As part of tradition, we feature new staff members in the *Journal* around the time of their 1-year anniversary. These profiles give you an opportunity to get to know our staff better and to learn more about the great programs and activities going on in your association. This month we are pleased to introduce you to one NEHA staff member. Contact information for all NEHA staff can be found on pages 50 and 51.



Chintan Somaiya

I joined NEHA in March 2022 as a senior project coordinator to manage and support the NEHA-FDA Retail Flexible Funding Model (RFFM) Grant Program. The FDA Voluntary Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards apply to the operation and management of a retail food regulatory program that is focused on the reduction of risk factors known to cause or contribute to foodborne illness and to the promotion of active managerial control of these risk factors. My

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goal is to support the vision of leadership to deliver a comprehensive data-driven program that enhances jurisdiction participation in the Retail Program Standards across the U.S. In addition to the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program, I also support grants management, data management, research, and dashboard development projects at NEHA to demonstrate the impact of our work on communities.

I graduated with a master of business administration in health-care administration from Loma Linda University in 2013. Along with that degree I also earned a master of science degree in food science and nutrition from Montclair State University in 2010 and an undergraduate degree in biotechnology in 2007 from the Birla Institute of Technology, Mesra.

I have had the great fortune of working with some of the finest industry experts who have mentored me through various academic and professional endeavors. At Montclair State University, I was able to work on research studies assessing the safety of ready-to-eat deli meats served in older adult care facilities in New Jersey. My second research study was to test the microbial safety of raw milk samples collected from farms across Pennsylvania.

At Loma Linda University Health (LLUH), I was able to work on the San Bernardino County Medi-Cal Outreach, Renewal, and

Enrollment (SBC-MORE) initiative, a county-sponsored grant program that extended Medi-Cal to high-risk populations in San Bernardino County, California. At the Institute for Community Partnerships at LLUH, I led the development and enhancement of its Community Benefit program and investments for LLUH's four licensed hospitals. Our work in training and development of the Community Health Worker program was nationally recognized and adopted. While at LLUH, I also had the opportunity to work and support multiple short film projects including *A Certain Kind of Light*, a story about the work and contributions of Dr. Wil Alexander, and *Community Health Worker "Saw Me as a Human,"* a video that highlights how a community health worker helped an individual navigate the complexities of our healthcare system.

My wife and I were blessed with a baby boy in 2022. Interestingly, my wife and son share the same birthday. I enjoy filmmaking, reading (*Ikigai* and *When Breath Becomes Air* are always on my reread list), long walks, and playing or watching the game of cricket. I consider myself an avid learner. I feel very fortunate to be part of NEHA, where we are surrounded by inspiring leaders and talented individuals willing to support the growth of aspiring healthcare and public health leaders. 🌸

**Find Your People.
Find Your Training.
Find Your Resources.**

Join our environmental health community. It is the only community of people who truly understand what it means to do what you do every day to protect the health of our communities.

Join us today. Your people are waiting.

neha.org/membership

