Background
The State Environmental Health Directors (SEHD) group is comprised of the management officials in each state/territorial public health agency who direct and oversee the majority of the environmental health programs such as food safety and sanitation, air and water quality, recreational sanitation and safety, waste management, toxicology, and environmental epidemiology and surveillance. SEHD members are designated by their state/territorial health official (S/THO). In some states, the public health agency does not oversee most of the environmental health programs. In these cases, a representative from the state environmental agency or other appropriate agency may serve as a member of the SEHD (e.g., DEQ, DNR).

In 2002, the Association of State and Territorial Health Official's (ASTHO) Environmental Health Policy Committee (EHPC) identified a need to convene state/territory-level environmental health directors to improve relationships and promote information exchange. With support from the National Center for Environmental Health at CDC, ASTHO convened the SEHD group. As a peer group within ASTHO, SEHD members receive staff support and connectivity with S/THOs. The SEHDs meet monthly via conference call and annually at an in-person meeting.

Purpose
- Develop a national identity and unified voice for state and territorial environmental public health practice.
- Enhance relationships and communication among states, territories, and partners.
- Provide a forum for discussion of key environmental health issues and the sharing of best practices.

Membership
- ASTHO expanded the SEHD in 2006 to include all state and territories. Currently, there are 51 SEHDs as designated by S/THOs.
- The SEHD Steering group is comprised of SEHDs in each of the 10 HHS Regions and act as the guiding body for the larger SEHD Group. Clifford Mitchell (MD - Chair), Glenn Cambre (LA), Suzanne Condon (MA), Lisa Conti (FL), Jack Daniel (NE), Diane Eckles (AZ), Sam LeFevre (UT), Ken Sharp (IA), Gail Shibley (OR), and Chuck Warzecha (WI) serve on the SEHD Steering Group.

Environmental Health Priority Issues
- **Safe Food and Water** – Recent outbreaks in the food supply, food inspection training needs, laboratory capacity and surveillance shortages, contaminants in drinking water, source water protection, the safety of recreational water, and controversy surrounding water treatments highlight the need to remain vigilant with respect to protecting and assuring the safety of food and water.
- **Healthy Communities** – State and territorial health agencies (S/THA) see the development of healthy communities as an integral component in addressing many public health issues including obesity, asthma and other respiratory conditions, waterborne disease outbreaks, mental health concerns, safety, and injuries.
• **Climate Change** – States are already seeing the impact of climate change on public health, including an increase of water and vector-borne diseases, drought, floods, wild fires, coastline loss, crop loss, and natural disasters.

• **Chemical Exposures** – There are significant state and federal efforts underway that aim to modernize the approach taken to protecting the public from hazardous chemical exposures.

• **Environmental Health Workforce** – Ongoing economic pressure on governmental health agencies, combined with shortages in qualified professionals in the market, are providing significant challenges for health agencies to optimally perform their environmental public health responsibilities.

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**Workgroups and Current Initiatives**

• **Safe Water:** The Safe Water Workgroup (SWWG) has been engaged in the implementation of the Virginia Graeme Baker Pool and Spa Safety Act, development of the CDC Model Aquatic Health Code, and EPA’s new Drinking Water Strategy. The SWWG is also in the process of redeveloping the *Small Systems Affordability and Criteria Variances Position Statement*; engaging with EPA on water security, source water protection, onsite wastewater, and the new drinking water strategy; creating an online resource for harmful algal blooms; and developing success stories around S/T environmental health practice and safe water.

• **Workforce Development:** The Workforce Development Workgroup identified the need for an electronic resource kit to aid state/territorial health agency (S/THA) staff with recruitment and retention of staff, training materials, and advocacy/marketing efforts. The workgroup also initiated conversation with the National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) to discuss ways to partner to address environmental health workforce challenges. The workgroup is currently aiming to publicize and expand the electronic resource kit, and forge new relationships with national partners.

• **Indoor Environments/Healthy Housing:** The Indoor Environmental Quality (IEQ) Workgroup was developed to address the scarcity of tools for measuring indoor environmental quality and the enforcement of healthy housing regulations. It includes representatives from SEHD, the National Center of Health Housing (NCHH), CDC, and EPA. In 2009, the IEQ workgroup developed and adopted a *Model Indoor Environmental Quality Policies Position Statement* to address the inadequacies in the current legal and regulatory framework for IEQ. The workgroup is currently drafting a multi-state IEQ surveillance tool that captures the work that occurs in state indoor environment programs.

• **Toxicology:** The Toxicology Workgroup is composed of representatives from S/THAs that have backgrounds in toxicology, risk assessment, and environmental epidemiology. The workgroup convenes on an ad-hoc basis when important technical assistance on a toxicology issue is needed or to weigh in on a chemical-related policy issue.

• **IT Infrastructure:** The SEHD group sees a strong IT infrastructure for environmental health surveillance programs as a way to evaluate the effectiveness of their programs, as well as a means to quantify the public health benefits from environmental public health activities. The goal of the IT Workgroup is to collect baseline information on existing IT infrastructure in S/THAs and identify areas for collaboration and improvement.

For more information: please contact Lindsey Realmuto, Environmental Health Analyst at ASTHO: 202-371-9090, lrealmuto@astho.org.