

Environmental Health – Waterborne Diseases

Ohio Department of Health, Office of Health Assurance and Licensing, Bureau of Environmental Health and Radiation Protection

Columbus, OH

Assignment Description

The Fellow will be placed in the Recreation Programs Unit within the Bureau of Environmental Health and Radiation Protection (BEHRP) in the Office of Health Assurance and Licensing (OHAL). The Bureau has full financial and operational support through OHAL and other Administrative Offices within the agency. BEHRP is routinely involved with other programmatic areas of the agency including the Bureau of Infectious Diseases, the Ohio Public Health Laboratory and the Office of the Medical Director. BEHRP currently houses the Food Safety, Private Water/Sewage Treatment; Indoor Environments, Lead Poisoning Prevention, School Environmental Health, Recreation Programs (Public Pools, Campgrounds, Beach Monitoring) and Radiation Protection programs.

Day-to-Day Activities

The Fellow will be working with staff in local health districts, Environmental Health, Infectious Diseases, Injury Prevention and Vital Statistics to collect data on HAB-related illnesses and drowning and non-fatal drownings. It is anticipated that the Fellow will also collaborate with the State Fire Marshal's office, the Ohio Coroner's Association and the child fatality review boards in Ohio. Additionally, the Fellow will participate in weekly epidemiology calls which include staff from the Bureau of Infectious Diseases, the Ohio Department of Agriculture, the Ohio Public Health Laboratory, the BEHRP Food Safety Program and the BEHRP Environmental Epidemiologist. It is anticipated that the Fellow will train local health districts on the drowning prevention and investigation protocol with staff from BEHRP. The Fellow will also assist in developing public outreach materials on drowning prevention and safe swimming practices.

The Fellow will provide ongoing education to the public via social media outlets on the Ohio beaches and public swimming pool program.

Potential Projects

Surveillance Evaluation

Evaluation of ODRS for Cryptosporidiosis from 2005 – 2015.

The Fellow will evaluate the Ohio Disease Reporting System, specifically for cryptosporidiosis. The evaluation will consist of reviewing surveillance data/reports, including geocoding, to assess distribution of the infections around the state and timing of infections in relation to environmental factors (e.g. rainfall, temperature).

Surveillance Activity Waterborne Disease Surveillance

The Fellow will work on a project that will continue efforts to expand state health department capacity to 1) detect, investigate and report waterborne disease outbreaks and harmful algal bloom (HAB) events associated with inland and Great Lake beach use, 2) where possible, connect this data to other environmental data and 3) use this data to inform decision making by public health agencies. The Fellow will also work with the Waterborne Disease Coordinator in the Bureau of Infectious Diseases on these efforts.

Major Project Drowning Prevention Program

The Fellow will be responsible for expanding the comprehensive drowning prevention program. This program will coordinate with individuals from a variety of areas, including the State Fire Marshal's office, the Ohio Coroners Association, local health districts and professional organizations. The Fellow will be required to utilize injury statistics, hospital ED data and vital statistics data to inform outreach and prevention efforts.

Additional Project Waterborne Disease

The Fellow will develop HAB-related health promotion and educational materials for the general public, public health and medical professionals to expand public awareness about reducing risks associated with recreational water use and those from private water systems on Lake Erie islands. The Fellow will also work with the Waterborne Disease Coordinator in the Bureau of Infectious Diseases on developing such materials.

Preparedness Role

The Fellow will be invited to participate in trainings, planning meetings (such as the Preparedness Workgroup), tabletop exercises, and other elements of Ohio's emergency preparedness planning. The Office of Health Assurance and Licensing has committed to providing additional support and opportunities for the Fellow's involvement in emergency preparedness.

Additional Activities

Previous Fellows had the opportunity to assist in Ohio's response to a large measles outbreak, Ebola response activities, and a community assessment for a public health emergency response regarding HAB-toxin in a public water supply. Emerging events, including those related to water, may lead to additional Fellow activities.

Mentors

Primary Mary DiOrio, MD, MPH
Medical Director

Secondary Mary Clifton, MA
Recreation Programs Administrator