

Identified Gaps and Needs

from CHE-Washington Membership Interviews and Survey
April through July 2007

The purpose of this survey was to gather information about existing needs and resources relating to environmental public health in Washington State. Participants were introduced to a searchable online calendar of events and invited to provide feedback regarding its utility and usability for their organizations. Responses will be used to develop and improve the calendar of events, create a clearinghouse of existing resources and determine appropriate marketing strategies for both these tools.

Part 1: Organizations

In April, six members of the Collaborative on Health and the Environment – Washington (CHE-WA) were selected for pilot interviews (see Appendix 1 for the pilot interview questions). They represented five nongovernmental organizations and one educational/academic one. These individuals were invited to participate in the survey, so their responses may be duplicated in the survey results. Input from these interviewees informed the creation of an online survey for members of CHE-WA who represent organizations with an interest in environmental health. On June 28th, email invitations were sent to 213 members. Ten messages were not deliverable to the addresses attempted, and so we assume that 203 individuals received the invitations. Reminder messages were sent on July 3rd and July 9th. The survey was removed on July 10th.

Twenty-seven survey respondents represented 20 different organizations, reported in these categories (not mutually exclusive):

- 5 educational/academic
- 14 government agency
- 5 nongovernmental organization
- 2 for-profit business
- 3 health-care facility, including one private medical practice

Twenty-three organizations have a local, state or regional focus, while four work nationally or internationally. None of the organizations focus on first nation or tribe affiliation.

Survey respondents' connections to environmental health (EH) varied from providing patient care to developing policy. Many mentioned a focus on education. Almost all respondents reported a strong connection to environmental health – respondents are from the mainstream of the EH field.

Part 2: Training Needs

Eight of the 27 survey respondents indicated they are not aware of unmet training needs in EH in their organizations, and one respondent did not answer this question. The remaining 18 indicated these unmet training needs from lists provided, one relating to skills and the other to content areas in EH (see Appendix 2 for the survey questions):

In skills training, unmet needs were reported widely in a few topics:

- communicating the connections between environmental and human health
- effectively using technology and media
- translating science for use by policymakers and/or consumers

- understanding and implementing ethics issues in public health, including human rights and social factors affecting health

While not achieving the widespread selection of the skills above, these skills topics were also frequently cited as needing training:

- data analysis and interpretation
- problem solving, including incorporating economic and political issues
- evaluating effectiveness of procedures, interventions and programs
- using risk assessment tools
- building and enhancing collaborations across organizations and/or sectors
- utilizing conflict resolution tools both internally and externally
- negotiating to achieve goals

In the content domains, every topic listed received substantial interest, even fairly basic concepts such as broad links between environment and human health or basic principles of toxicology.

Four of six interviewees and seven survey respondents offered their own responses in these categories that were not specifically represented in the skills and content lists:

- leadership
- connecting the missions of environmental and public health advocacy groups, especially regarding climate change, children's exposures to toxics, cancer and neurodevelopment
- social marketing and behavior change
- comparison of various learning methods
- environmental justice issues
- keeping up with the science
- eliminating toxic chemicals

There is apparently a strong perceived need for both skills and content training among survey respondents such that trainings in both the underlying science of EH and in applying that science to communications, ethics, leadership, collaboration, social marketing and behavior change are requested.

Survey respondents indicated familiarity with finding out about upcoming trainings and events through existing listservs and other email contacts and by word of mouth. With respondents already using email publicity, CHE-WA can increase its effectiveness by increasing the number of organizations that publicize events and trainings through its regular bulletin, supplemented by the online calendar. To achieve this, CHE-WA can increase efforts in these activities:

- Outreach to specific organizations that hold events, inviting them to publicize through CHE-WA's calendar and listserv.
- Search existing EH-related calendars and websites for events to list, including teleconferences and webcasts from throughout the country that residents can attend from anywhere in the state.
- Publicize the online calendar through a link in the regular bulletins and via websites of related organizations. Encouraging reciprocal links with other organizations may raise awareness of EH events and trainings among individuals for whom EH is a secondary but still relevant focus, such as school nurses, health-care providers, local government officials (especially those involved with public health) and parents.

Part 3: Feedback on a Searchable Calendar

Survey respondents indicated that the CHE-Washington searchable calendar interface was easy to use, and the information presented was fairly easy to interpret. Several very positive comments about the calendar were made along with suggestions for additional information or search features to include. Suggested improvements that have been incorporated into the calendar include these:

- Limit the scope to the Pacific Northwest.
- Show all the events initially so that users do not have to do a search but can browse through the calendar.
- Have the search terms that were selected show up in the results.
- Keep the last search terms selected in the results so that a user doesn't have to start a new search from scratch.
- Include the sponsor and price of an event.
- Include the days of the week with the date.
- Search by CEUs.
- Separate lectures from trainings.
- Make the calendar's "updated" date in a different font and location from the event dates.

Suggested changes that have not been incorporated (and the reason):

- Combine lectures, seminars and trainings (interviewees indicated they wanted these separated).
- Include directions and information on parking and public transit (this is beyond the scope of CHE-WA staff; users can contact the event providers for this information since virtually all events include a website and/or contact information).
- Include a contact person's name and phone number in addition to an email address (this information is not always available to CHE-WA staff; a reasonable effort is made to provide a website and contact information, but CHE-WA staff cannot spend extra time obtaining details that event sponsors do not provide).
- Present information in a calendar format (CHE-WA staff do not have the technical expertise to do this and still keep the calendar searchable).
- Show events by quarter instead of by month (Because all events are shown initially in chronological order, users can browse to find events in a quarter).
- Show just the event name and date – hide the remaining information until the user clicks on the title (CHE-WA's website designer has experience with trying this effect and has concluded that it takes more expensive software and/or a more qualified webmaster than we have available. Event titles are in bold, and details are indented to make visually moving from one event to the next easier).
- Include the ability to search by a topic, such as asthma (there is a wide array of possible topics, and when combined with a relatively small number – a few dozen – events in the calendar at any one time, there would be many, many topics that produced a "no matching events" result. CHE-WA staff feel this would not be productive in searching. However, search instructions using a browser's built-in search function to find specific words have been added to the search results).

While most respondents indicated that a searchable website would be useful, only one third marked that they would be very likely to use it. More than two thirds indicated they would want to publicize their own events in this calendar. Therefore, CHE-WA staff feel the calendar is useful, but publishing events from the calendar in CHE-WA's regular bulletins should be continued as the most effective way to publicize them.

Part 4: Current Training Capabilities

All six interviewees and 25 of 27 survey respondents indicated that a clearinghouse of materials and expertise on EH topics and issues would be helpful (the remaining two survey respondents did not answer the question). Fourteen survey respondents and five of the six interviewees provided information about materials to share. Cataloging materials and providing an online searchable database for CHE-WA users will be a main thrust of CHE-WA's follow-up to this survey.

Appendix 1: Interview Questions

Part 1: Introduction

I'm Nancy Snow with the Institute for Children's Environmental Health. We're conducting a analysis of the needs of CHE-WA members on environmental public health issues and trainings in Washington State. (The Washington Tracking Network is funding a project to improve access to EHP trainings, and this interview is part of our data-gathering process toward that.)

Part 2: Training Needs

1. How would you classify your organization (academic, government, etc.) and what is its connection to EH?
2. Do you see any unmet needs for training in EH in your organization?
3. In what areas or topics in EH is training needed?
4. How do you currently find out about lectures, workshops and other trainings in EH, both within and outside your organization?
5. Would an online database of EH trainings in Washington State be useful to your organization?
6. Would you be able to take a few minutes to look at a prototype searchable calendar of events and provide feedback regarding its ease of use and relevance to EH in your organization?

Part 3: Feedback on Searchable Calendar

Please go to <http://www.iceh.org/calendar.html>.

7. Have you ever used this calendar before now?
8. Take a minute to interact with this web page and tell me your thoughts about how it works for you and your organization. I'll have specific questions for you, but first I'd like to get your impressions.
9. Are the categories included in this web page clear? Are there other categories that you would want to be able to search by?
10. I would like you to find a list of just the upcoming trainings and lectures in Washington State. How difficult is it to do this through this web page?
11. How easy is it for you to identify and interpret the information displayed after you make a request? Can you easily find the date, location, website, contact person and other critical information for events? What other information should be included?

12. Would you like to see a calendar like this specific to Washington State, or is it more useful to have all events and meetings in one calendar?
13. Would you or others in your organization use an online calendar to find out about EH trainings and other events?
14. Would you or others in your organization want to publicize your own events through a calendar similar to this?
15. Would you or others in your organization rather learn about upcoming events through a website similar to this or through an email message posted to a listserv?
16. Do you have any other feedback, questions or comments about this searchable calendar?

Part 4: Current Training Capabilities

17. What EH trainings that are open to the public or to other CHE members and organizations (lectures, workshops, symposia, classes and other trainings) does your organization provide?
18. Does your organization publish a training resource catalog or other compilation of EH opportunities for the public?
19. What EH topics does your organization already have materials or curricula for?
20. Would a clearinghouse of available trainings (expertise and/or materials) in Washington State be of interest to your organization?

Part 5: Other Comments

21. Do you have any other comments or remarks to add about these topics?

Part 6: Others to Contact

22. Would you like to provide information about other organizations within Washington State that you think should be involved in this interview? Can you give the name and contact information about an individual at that organization?

Appendix 2: Survey Questions

Member Survey

 search CHE-NW

Introduction

The Institute for Children's Environmental Health is conducting an analysis of the needs and existing resources of CHE-WA members on environmental public health issues, trainings and events in Washington State. We invite CHE-WA members to provide insights and feedback on these topics. The survey involves 22 questions in four sections. The entire survey should take between 15 and 30 minutes to complete. The survey will be available online until **July 9, 2007**. After that, survey results will be posted here as they become available.

Interview Option

If you would rather complete this survey as a phone interview, please contact Nancy Snow: 360-221-8664 or nsnow@iceh.org.

Part 1: Organization Description

1. Please provide the name of your business, organization or agency (optional):

2. Please classify your organization (select all that apply):

- educational/academic
- government agency
- nongovernmental organization
- for-profit business
- health-care facility
- other: describe

3. What is the primary scope of your organization's work? (select one)

- national or international
- state/regional
- local
- first nation/tribe or tribal affiliate

4. Briefly describe your organization's connection to environmental health:

Part 2: Training Needs

5. Are you aware of unmet needs for training in environmental health in your organization?

yes

no (skip to question 7)

6. In what areas or topics in environmental health might training be needed in your organization? Please provide your topics here and/or select all that apply from the lists below.

Skills training

- information gathering: identifying and compiling relevant information
- data analysis and interpretation
- problem solving, including incorporating economic and political issues
- project implementation and management
- communicating the connections between environmental and human health
- effectively using technology and media
- evaluating effectiveness of procedures, interventions and programs
- using risk assessment tools
- translating science for use by policymakers and/or consumers
- understanding government and/or corporate cultures
- building and enhancing collaborations across organizations and/or sectors
- utilizing conflict resolution tools both internally and externally
- negotiating to achieve goals
- understanding and implementing ethics issues in public health, including human rights and social factors affecting health

Content domains

- broad links between environment and human health
- low-dose exposures and disease/disabilities
- basic principles of toxicology – chemicals and health
- how multiple chemicals interact in the body
- vulnerability of children to chemicals
- cancer and the environment
- neurodevelopment and environment
- asthma/respiratory development and environment
- reproductive health and the environment

- immune system and the environment
- endocrine system and the environment
- interplay of chemicals with other environmental and genetic factors that influence health, such as nutrition, poverty, stress, infectious disease, etc.
- public health policies related to environmental health

7. How do you currently find out about lectures, workshops and other trainings and events in environmental health, both within and outside your organization? Please select all that apply.

- receiving notification from a listserv (Please specify, such as CHE-WA or WA-Assess)
- receiving an email from a colleague
- routinely checking particular websites (Please specify which websites:)
- reading about a training in a newsletter (Please specify which newsletters:)
- organization / agency / institution requires the training
- word of mouth / announcement at meetings
- other:

8. What is your preferred way to learn about upcoming events? Please mark all that apply.

- through a website
- through an email message posted to a listserv
- other:

9. Would an online searchable calendar of events related to environmental health topics or skills in Washington State be useful to your organization?

- yes
- no

comments:

Part 3: Feedback on a Searchable Calendar

CHE-WA has recently launched a searchable calendar of events in environmental health that may be of interest to residents of Washington. Please go to <http://www.chenw.org/cgi-bin/searchevents.cgi> [this should open in a new window], then return to this page to answer the following questions about using this calendar.

10. Have you ever used this calendar before now?

- yes (about how many times?)
- no

11. Please use the search fields in the calendar window to search for the upcoming teleconferences in July. After completing that, return to this page and rate how easy or difficult is it to do this through the searchable calendar.

- very easy
- somewhat easy
- somewhat difficult
- very difficult

comments:

12. Go again to the calendar search results and look at the information displayed. How easy or difficult is it for you to interpret the information displayed, including the date, location, price, website and contact person?

- very easy
- somewhat easy
- somewhat difficult
- very difficult

comments:

13. What other information should be included?

14. Are there other fields besides scope, month and category that you would want to be able to search by?

- yes (specify:)
- no

15. How likely would you or others in your organization be to use this online calendar to find out about environmental health trainings and other events?

- very likely
- somewhat likely
- somewhat unlikely
- very unlikely
- not applicable (reason:)

16. Would you or others in your organization like to publicize your own events through this calendar?

- yes, please contact this person for details:
- yes, we'll contact the calendar administrator
- no
- not applicable

17. Other feedback, questions or comments about this searchable calendar:

Part 4: Current Training Capabilities

CHE-WA is building a clearinghouse of stored materials within our member organizations. This searchable clearinghouse could be used to provide information for trainings, letters and briefings for policymakers, presentations, grant applications and other uses.

18. Would a clearinghouse of available trainings, expertise and/or materials in Washington State be of interest to your organization?

yes

no

comments:

19. Does your organization have any materials for trainings (lectures, workshops, symposia, classes and other trainings) that you would be willing to share with the public or other CHE-Washington members?

yes

no (skip to question 22)

20. What environmental health topics does your organization already have materials or curricula for?

Please list topics here or provide a website if available.

21. Does your organization publish a resource catalog or other compilation of environmental health materials for the public?

yes (please describe how can we access this:)

no

22. Other comments about making information about environmental health trainings and resources available on the CHE-WA website: