



# National Environmental Public Health Internship Program (NEPHIP) Health Department Guide



National Environmental  
Health Association

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## NEPHIP Health Department Guide

We at the National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) welcome public health practitioners and agency staff to the newly updated NEPHIP Guide. You will find this overview packed with helpful information about NEPHIP. There are links throughout specifically for students and public health agencies to start the application process.

### About Us

NEHA was established in 1937 to build, sustain, and empower an effective environmental health workforce. Currently serving 6,500 members, we empower and educate these professionals by providing them with the tools and resources they need to make the greatest contributions possible in creating healthy environments for their communities.

We offer six national highly regarded credentials and eight certifications, produces the Annual Educational Conference & Exhibition, and publishes the widely respected and peer-reviewed Journal of Environmental Health (JEH). The JEH serves as a one-stop-shop for publications in every area of the environmental health field through its online bookstore, providing networking and committee participation opportunities, and developing positions on timely and serious environmental health concerns.

### NEHA Programs

- Climate and health
- Food safety
- Private water and recreational water safety
- Vector and pest control
- Environmental health workforce development
- Air quality
- Health homes
- Tracking and informatics
- Emergency preparedness

To learn more about NEHA, please visit [www.neha.org/about](http://www.neha.org/about)



## About the Program

For the past eight years, we have developed and hosted the National Environmental Public Health Internship Program (NEPHIP) through our partnership with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to help environmental health student interns to gain valuable work experience, develop meaningful professional relationships, and ultimately to introduce them to the many diverse and rewarding career opportunities that exist in state, tribal, local, and territorial (STLT) environmental public health departments following graduation.

NEPHIP is a 400-hour paid internship opportunity linking environmental health undergraduate and graduate students from the National Environmental Health Science and Protection Accreditation Council (EHAC) accredited programs, to qualified public health agencies for NEPHIP funded internships. This workforce initiative supports establishment of qualified applicant pipelines to STLT public health departments.

Year after year NEPHIP demonstrates our success in connecting highly qualified environmental health students with STLT health agencies. Interns experience firsthand, the needs, benefits, and opportunities of working in governmental public health agencies. Practitioners share by example the important work environmental health professionals engage in every day. STLT health agencies are matched with interns trained by National Environmental Health Science and Protection Accreditation Council (EHAC) accredited programs. The qualified interns are eager to contribute their support to each environmental health program's delivery of public health services.

Students, through cooperative efforts with their health agency mentor, faculty supervisor, and environmental health program will have the opportunity to:

- Gain internship hours required for their degree
- Earn credit hours for required coursework
- Complete a special project for their portfolio
- Become inspired about coursework and find passion for a specific direction in environmental health
- Network with environmental health professionals and community members
- Form connections with mentors to gain career guidance and opportunities

Participating public health agencies can anticipate many benefits through hosting a NEPHIP intern, including:

- Dedicated intern assistance to advance identified project work



- Fresh perspectives from students who will be the next generation of environmental health professionals
- Additional support for projects that have been impacted by competing priorities
- Opportunity for increased staff engagement, peer connections, and invitations to new initiatives and programs
- Recruiting and hiring opportunities for workforce expansion

## We Are Here to Help

Public health agency staff are encouraged to contact us for assistance with hosting questions about the NEPHIP program and the application process. Please email us at [NEPHIP@neha.org](mailto:NEPHIP@neha.org). We look forward to working with your team to become a NEPHIP host agency.

NEPHIP is supported by CDC's National Center for Environmental Health through cooperative agreement CDC-RFA-OT18-1802.



## NEHA Partnerships to support NEPHIP

### EHAC-Accredited Programs

Since 1967 the Environmental Health Accreditation Council - EHAC has been the gold standard of environmental health program accreditation at universities across the nation. You can find out more through this link [NEHSPAC](#) to the **National Environmental Health Science & Protection Accreditation Council** the official name of EHAC was adopted over 2 decades ago.

Because of the long-trusted accreditation process and standards still applied by the EHAC volunteer council members the CDC has restricted the NEPHIP internship awards to only students from EHAC accredited programs. A list of EHAC-accredited undergraduate and graduate environmental health academic programs is provided below. Information on becoming accredited is available at <https://www.nehspac.org>

- [Accredited Undergraduate Environmental Health Academic Programs](#)
- [Accredited Graduate Environmental Health Academic Programs](#)

### Association of Environmental Health Academic Programs (AEHAP)

AEHAP was started in 1999 with the mission to support and grow EHAC accredited programs with the vision to bring more trained environmental health practitioners and professionals into the nationwide workforce. In support of member academic programs AEHAP focuses on opportunities for students throughout their academic time into their early career years with many initiatives.

The dedicated volunteers serving on the AEHAP board hold program director and faculty roles at EHAC accredited programs across the nation. Through AEHAP the energy and passion for passing on knowledge and experience of the environmental health field to students is shared well beyond the classroom.

AEHAP is excited to be partnering with us to facilitate filling every NEPHIP internship available. Having mentored and championed students through the years AEHAP is privileged to be part of the team of environmental health professionals helping each student create a valuable NEPHIP internship experience.



## NEPHIP Program Updates

In 2022, we launched a newly revised and expanded National Environmental Public Health Internship Program (NEPHIP). The expanded program offers many additional benefits and opportunities for professional and career development:

- Choice of internship cohorts each year with opportunities to enroll in Summer, Fall, or Spring NEPHIP internships
- Now up to 50 EHAC student interns can be selected per academic year
- Strengthened promotion and recruitment support for increased diversity and inclusion among interns
- Enhanced internship coordination and evaluation support to strengthen experiential learning outcomes
- Opportunity to consider how climate change can both directly and indirectly impact environmental health hazards, community health outcomes, and environmental public health program sustainability
- Consider environmental justice and health equity concerns as part of internship projects to identify disproportionate health effects among various local population groups
- Small support packages offered to selected host sites to help offset some intern project related costs, support project outcomes, and encourage health agency participation as NEPHIP host sites

### Internship Format

To allow flexibility for students, NEPHIP now offers the internship experience via virtual, in-person/on-site, or hybrid formats depending on student and health department needs.

In response to the pandemic, the 2020 NEPHIP program was modified to offer virtual internships in place of in-person experiences. The NEPHIP Network was launched as a virtual community of practice and we will continue to engage students through the online community. The network is administered and supported by us in partnership with the CDC.



## Our Role

Our role in NEPHIP is to help build new relationships between EHAC-accredited environmental health academic programs and state, tribal, local, and territorial environmental public health departments. In this role, we will solicit applications from eligible host agencies and select host agencies based on established application criteria, including intern support, interesting and applicable independent student project, breadth, and depth of programmatic intern opportunities, PHAB accreditation, serving medically under-served and/or rural populations, and geographic and student diversity.

In addition, we will also undertake the following activities -

- Solicit applications from eligible students and select interns based on established application criteria, including academic competence, resume, written essay responses, faculty letter of recommendation, and other qualifications
- Match selected interns with host agencies and ensure the intern's qualifications and professional goals match with opportunities at the health department
- Provide support to interns throughout duration of internship and ensure timely delivery of the three stipend payments directly to interns
- Provide health departments with intern support packages to help cover costs associated with hosting an intern
- Administer the internships that offers multiple benefits and perks to the interns including membership to NEHA, mentorship sessions with seasoned environmental health leaders, virtual career fair, free admission to networking events, professional development preconference workshop, and publishing opportunities
- Providing coordination support to interns and health departments throughout duration of internship
- Evaluate the quality and the effectiveness of the internship experience





## Health Department Benefits, Eligibility, and Application

State, tribal, local, and territorial health departments interested in hosting an environmental health student intern are required to complete the application form and meet the eligibility criteria outlined below.

### NEPHIP Considerations and Benefits

#### Internship Format

We have opened the experience to virtual, in-person/on-site, or hybrid formats depending on student and health department needs

#### Support and Coordination

Participating health departments are provided:

- a support package valued at up to \$1,500 to compensate for intern-related costs
- enhanced administrative support from NEHA staff for weekly intern-mentor meetings
- a streamlined evaluation process

#### Quality Improvement or Accreditation

Health agencies with internship projects related to national performance management and quality improvement initiatives, including use of the [Environmental Public Health Performance Standards](#) or attaining national voluntary accreditation through the [Public Health Accreditation Board \(PHAB\)](#), may receive extra consideration for intern placements.

#### School Requirements

Internships must meet the requirements of the host health agency, as well as the student's academic institution and NEPHIP eligibility guidelines. Only students from National Environmental Health Science and Protection Accreditation Council (EHAC) programs are eligible for NEPHIP. Internship start and end dates, number of hours, number of credits, etc. should be determined and agreed upon by the academic program and health agency.

#### Intern/Health Agency Matching

Students and health agencies will be matched by our staff based on each student's experience and interest and on host site's project portfolio. Health agencies may have the opportunity to interview selected students prior to acceptance; however, if a health agency declines the student post-interview, a replacement student may not be guaranteed.



## Eligibility

To be considered as a host program, the health agency or environmental health program should be able to:

1. Have the ability to assist the student in identifying and completing an independent project that focuses on solving a current environmental health problem or challenge facing the jurisdiction.
2. The project may be used by the intern to meet university internship requirements.
3. Provide opportunities for student interns to be exposed to multiple environmental health programs/activities throughout the internship. Examples include climate and health, food safety, onsite water and wastewater programs, vector control, institutional environmental health, or emergency preparedness.
4. Assign a mentor to the intern who should be available to assist in mentoring and advising the student intern on the independent project on a routine basis throughout the internship period.

### Other Considerations

Health departments engaged in national performance management and quality improvement initiatives, including use of the [Environmental Public Health Performance Standards](#) or attaining national voluntary accreditation through the [Public Health Accreditation Board \(PHAB\)](#), may receive extra consideration for intern placements.

Students and health departments will be matched by our staff based on student's interest and host site's project portfolio. Students are not always guaranteed this consideration. Health departments may have the opportunity to interview selected students prior to acceptance; however, if a health department declines the student post-interview, a replacement student may not be guaranteed.

### Health Department Application

Applications are currently open to state, tribal, local, and territorial public health agencies to apply for a summer (2023) internship experience. Complete [Health Department Host Site Application](#) to apply to be a host site.



## Role of the Host Health Department Mentor

The mentor is expected to fulfill the responsibilities outlined below. Although interns may vary in their experience and exposure to environmental health practice and some may be skilled in various technical areas, all interns benefit from regular interaction, guidance, and feedback from their mentors. The mentor is expected to engage interns, discuss project progress, successes, and challenges, dialogue about the internship experience and answer questions that arise, and introduce students to various programs, activities and services that are operated by the department/program to support knowledge and exposure to various environmental health services and topic areas. Host health departments should provide opportunities for the intern to observe and/or participate in team meetings, engage with community members and agency partners, as well as facilitate one to one mentoring. The mentor will:

- Work with the NEHA Internship Coordinator and the student intern to ensure that the internship meets all academic requirements.
- Oversee the intern's work activities.
- Be positive and supportive.
- Be fair, considerate, honest, trustworthy, and cooperative when dealing with working with intern.
- Offer advice and assistance.
- Be available to give feedback to the student.
- Assist the intern in following host health department policies and practices. Ensure the intern completes the full 400-hours.
- Approve stipends, confirming intern participation.

The mentor should be available to advise the intern throughout the internship period. Health department hosts are encouraged to assign a mentor who is professionally registered (REHS or RS) whenever possible. Health agency staff who are graduates of an environmental health academic program accredited by the National Environmental Health Science and Protection Accreditation Council (EHAC) are encouraged to participate as mentors in the program.



## Terms of Agreement for the Internship

**Internship Format:** We have opened the experience to virtual, in-person/on-site, or hybrid formats depending on student and health department needs. We offer a host of virtual tools to help support virtual internships including an online community platform for all NEPHIP interns.

**Matching:** Our staff will match the selected interns with the environmental health departments based on geolocation preferences, interests, and professional goals that align with opportunities at the health department. We cannot guarantee the preferred placement.

**Stipend:** Participating health departments are provided a support package valued at up to \$1,500 to compensate for intern related costs.

**Internship Start Date:** Spring 2023 NEPHIP interns will participate in a 400-hour internship over 10-16 weeks. Spring 2023 internships will begin in January 2023. Internships beginning after the date range will require approval from us, the academic program advisor and health department mentor. Summer 2023 NEPHIP interns will participate in a 400-hour internship over 10 consecutive weeks, beginning in May 2023.

**Internship End Date:** If students choose to extend their internship past 10-16 weeks, it is the responsibility of the host health department and the student to cover liability and cost. Students requesting to extend their time must inform us in writing within one month of starting their internship and must have a signed document from the host health department accepting responsibility for the intern post the 10-16-week program.

**Work Hours:** Interns are expected to work within the host health department's hours of operation. Students and health departments in the same or neighboring time zones will be matched accordingly for those participating in virtual or hybrid internship formats.

**Working Arrangements:** All arrangements for the internship, including start and end dates, work hours or timesheet, sick policy, etc. should be made by the academic program in partnership with the intern and host health department mentor to meet academic guidelines and requirements.

**Midterm Progress and Internship Evaluation:** The host health department mentor will be asked to complete weekly evaluation forms and to meet with the NEHA internship



coordinator to provide feedback on their experience at the midpoint of the internship. This will be an opportunity for the mentor to discuss their experience and any issues. However, please contact us at any time if questions or concerns arise. Mentors will also be asked to evaluate their experience and NEPHIP program at the conclusion of the internship. This information is helpful for making program improvements, determining impact, and demonstrating outcomes.

**Liability:** We are acting solely as an administrator for the stipend and has NO responsibility for internship arrangements, academic program requirements or liability insurance. Interns are asked to sign a waiver to confirm their understanding that the internship is under the guidance of the host health department and academic program. Host health departments or academic programs are encouraged to provide liability coverage for the intern.

**Non-Compliance with Program Requirements:** We reserve the right to terminate intern stipend payments in response to unacceptable conduct, disciplinary problems, or performance-based actions noted by the intern's academic program advisor or health department mentor. Stipends will be pro-rated through the last day worked by the intern.

**Withdrawing from NEPHIP:** In the event the student wishes to voluntarily withdraw from the assignment at any time, he or she must follow academic program guidelines as well as provide 14 days written notice to us.



## Project Guidance and Considerations

Independent projects are open to a wide variety of environmental public health issues and identified program needs identified by local environmental public health host sites. Together with CDC, we are encouraging interested students and health departments to explore how environmental health, climate change, and environmental justice issues are either directly or indirectly associated with the purpose and environmental health hazard/issue being addressed by proposed projects. Considerations regarding how these priority areas converge with environmental health hazards and their impact on community health outcomes and environmental public health program sustainability are included in the revised program impact and evaluation metrics. Further, projects will be asked to help identify environmental justice and health equity concerns that are associated with identified internship projects and help to better understand the disproportionate health effects these issues may have among various population groups.

The health department mentor and agency will identify a project focus for the internship. The focus should be from an initiative, project or program that is a current concern identified within the scope of issues normally addressed by the hosting agency jurisdiction. Students and health departments will be matched by our staff based on student's interest and host site's project portfolio. Examples of potential projects include:

- **Climate and Health - The impact of indoor and outdoor air quality on health and policy:** conducting an in-depth analysis on environmental policies currently in place within the health department's jurisdiction and their ability to impact human health.
- **Climate and Health - Identifying contributing factors to wildfire conditions:** conducting an assessment on mitigation and adaptation strategies, health effects of smoke, and evaluating effective communication strategies to reduce risk.
- **Vector Control - Identifying impacts of climate change on vector populations and control strategies:** analyze data to determine any geographic trends in vector-borne disease to inform enhanced surveillance in disaster-prone regions.
- **Water Quality - Using EPA's Cyanobacteria Assessment Network (CyAN) tool for identifying harmful algal blooms (HABs):** assist in assessing the environmental health information and untreated recreational water data systems used by the health department and associated partners to determine



whether current systems adequately identify and characterize untreated recreational water hazards and harmful exposures.

- **Data Informatics/Tracking - Identify and extract data from relevant data sources:** conduct research to understand the impacts of environmental health hazards on vulnerable and under-served populations and inform public health policies.

Deliverable examples could include a literature review, a community health assessment, a white paper/report, an infographic, or a presentation/report of findings and recommendations.

NEPHIP interns and host public health agencies have access to guidance and support from our staff along with faculty from the intern's specific environmental health program. Our partners, EHAC and AEHAP, are ready to assist when appropriate and requested.



## Resources

1. NEHA's NEPHIP Webpage: <https://www.neha.org/nephip>
2. NEPHIP Health Department Eligibility and Benefits: <https://www.neha.org/nephip-health-dept>
3. NEPHIP Health Department Application: <https://forms.office.com/r/8SScLKfhW7>
4. National Environmental Health Science & Protection Accreditation Council (EHAC) – <https://www.nehspac.org/about-ehac/>
5. EHAC Undergraduate Accredited Degree Programs - <https://www.nehspac.org/about-ehac/accredited-programs-ehac-undergraduate-programs/>
6. EHAC Graduate Accredited Degree Programs - <https://www.nehspac.org/about-ehac/accredited-programs-ehac-graduate-programs/>
7. Association of Environmental Health Academic Programs - <https://www.aehap.org/>

