



National Environmental Health Association Position to Support the Registered Environmental Health Specialist/Registered Sanitarian Credential for Environmental Health Professionals

The National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) represents more than 5,000 environmental health professionals throughout the United States and around the world. NEHA is the profession's strongest advocate for excellence in the practice of environmental health. NEHA's mission is the advancement of the environmental health professional and it serves to provide quality training, continuing education, and credentials to its members and environmental health professionals.

Environmental health programs carried out by Registered Environmental Health Specialists (REHS) and Registered Sanitarians (RS), as well as other credentialed personnel, serve to prevent illness, injury, and death. Additionally, credentialed personnel within these programs work to improve the quality of life in local communities and to prepare their communities to respond to and recover from disasters including terrorism events, acts of nature, and pandemics.

Data concerning the environmental health workforce strongly point to two key reasons that professional credentialing is important. First, obtaining a professional credential assures that an individual has obtained and can demonstrate core competencies that are relevant to providing communities with high quality environmental health services. Second, the process by which an individual becomes certified also ensures that the individual is current with contemporary standards within the profession and is utilizing best practice models consistent with current research and science.

NEHA asserts that employing credentialed REHS and RS staff working in well managed and effective programs results in an overall economic gain for the community based on disease prevention, extended lives, enhanced productivity, and reduced lost time from work. There is an added community benefit that comes with better rates of retention within environmental health programs as the workforce achieves the greater professionalism that comes with certification through a nationally recognized credential like the REHS/RS.

Most localities depend on a small cadre of environmental health professionals to protect their communities from disease and environmental hazards. Hiring and retaining REHS and RS credentialed professionals is the most viable way to ensure quality and capacity in environmental health.

NEHA takes the position that

- health is the basis of every community's prosperity;
- providing safe food, safe drinking water, clean air, safe sewage disposal, emergency response, and healthy living and workplace environments are basic necessities for communities;
- assuring a healthy living environment requires a workforce of well-trained and technically competent credentialed environmental health specialists and sanitarians; and
- environmental health agencies and industry partners must attract and retain credentialed and trained environmental health professionals to provide capacity and quality in environmental health programs in order to protect the health of our communities.

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