

# ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMS AND SERVICES FOOD SAFETY AND PROTECTION RESULTS FACTSHEET

In early 2019, ASTHO’s Environmental Health team fielded the Environmental Health Programs and Services Survey among members of ASTHO’s state environmental health directors (SEHD) peer group. The survey asked about a variety of environmental health program or service areas, primarily tasking SEHD peer group members with categorizing where these programs or services are conducted in their states or territories. This factsheet describes results from the Food Safety and Protection section of the survey.

## RESULTS

Figure 1 shows select food safety and protection activities performed at state and territorial health agencies. The blue bar represents activities performed by environmental health divisions, and the orange bar represents activities performed by different sections or divisions within agencies.<sup>1,2</sup>

- ✔ Respondents were asked to classify where various activities were performed from the following options:
  - “Your section/division.”
  - “A different section/division within your agency.”
  - “Another state/territorial agency.”
  - “County and/or local health agency (state/territory funded/supported or locally-led).”
  - “Contracted out by your state/territorial health agency to [a] third party.”
  - “None of the above.”
  - “Unknown.”

Respondents could choose multiple options for a single activity.

- ✔ The classification choice “your section/division” corresponded to the SEHD’s section or division, while “a different section/division within your agency” corresponded to other sections or divisions within the state or territorial health agency (except for Alaska).
- ✔ Most SEHD peer group members (n=49) responded to the survey. Maine’s partial response was included in this count. In some cases, respondents did not answer all questions in a particular section.
- ✔ These data are a snapshot in time and do not make any distinctions between lead sections, divisions, or agencies for each activity.

**Figure 1: Select Food Safety and Protection Activities Performed at State and Territorial Health Agencies**



<sup>1</sup> Responding agencies were state/territorial health departments, except for Alaska, which was represented by the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation.

<sup>2</sup> Figure 1 is a small selection of the total activities included in the Food Safety and Protection Programs and Services section of the survey.

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## KEY TAKEAWAYS<sup>3</sup>

- ☀ Most survey respondents (88%) indicated that their section or division performs at least one of the food safety and protection activities listed in the survey.
- ☀ The top three activities performed in the SEHD's section or division are "development and adoption of food safety and protection rules and regulations" (80%), "recalls and news alerts" (73%), and "foodborne illness investigations" (67%).
- ☀ The top three activities performed in a different section or division are "foodborne illness investigations" (63%), "healthcare facility food operation inspections" (37%), and "food security (terrorism prevention and response)" (29%).<sup>4</sup>
- ☀ The top three activities performed in another state or territorial agency are "on-farm produce safety inspections" (69%), "dairy enforcement" (55%), and "dairy ratings" (45%).<sup>5</sup> For clarification, results for "another state/territorial agency" are not shown in Figure 1.

## IN SUMMARY

As shown above, ASTHO's SEHD peer group members play an important role in conducting food safety and protection programs and services. Among the top three activities performed by "your section/division" and "a different section/division within your agency," "foodborne illness investigations" was a shared top activity, with 18 respondents indicating that their section or division and a different section or division within their agency both work on said activity. However, there was no overlap between the top three activities performed by "your section/division" and "another state/territorial agency." To access the full survey results, please visit the 2019 Environmental Health Programs and Services Survey [online portal](#).

*This factsheet was supported through cooperative agreement OT18-1802.NU38, Strengthening Public Health Systems and Services through National Partnerships to Improve and Protect the Nation's Health, awarded to the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials and funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention National Center for Environmental Health and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry. The contents of this publication are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.*

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<sup>3</sup> 49 peer group members (n=49) responded to each prompt below except for "food security (terrorism prevention and response)," for which 48 peer group members (n=48) submitted responses.

<sup>4</sup> "Food security (terrorism prevention and response)" was not included in Figure 1.

<sup>5</sup> "On-farm produce safety inspections," "dairy enforcement," and "dairy ratings" were not included in Figure 1.