

# CA Mentorship Participants

## Butte County (CA) Public Health Department

### Background

**State:** California

**LHD Population Size Served:** 222,090

**Number of Retail Food Establishments Inspected:** 32 seasonal and 1,178 year round food service establishments

**Retail Program Standards Met/Working On:** 6 – Compliance and Enforcement

**Enrolled in the Retail Program Standards:** 2006

**NACCHO Mentorship Program Cohort:** 5

The mission of the Butte County Public Health Department (BCPHD) is to protect the public through promoting individual, community, and environmental health. Environmental Health programs and services strive to prevent human injury and illness and promote well-being by identifying and evaluating environmental sources and hazardous agents; and limiting exposures to hazardous physical, chemical, and biological agents in air, soil, food, and other environmental media or settings that may adversely affect human health.

BCPHD has one Consumer Protection Supervisor and five Registered Environmental Health Specialists. These staff members also inspect small public water systems, body art, public pools and organized camps. Our jurisdiction consists of approximately 222,090 year round residents. Butte County has approximately 32 seasonal and 1,178 year round food service establishments, including restaurants, markets, bars, hotels, schools, hospitals, nursing homes, gas stations, mobile food, caterers, temporary food, cottage food, and bed and breakfast facilities. We perform risk based inspections following the California Retail Food Code and the Butte County Field Inspection Guide. High risk facilities receive three routine inspections per year and low risk facilities receive one routine inspection per year. The majority of facilities are in a middle-risk category and receive two routine inspections per year. We established a stakeholder Food Safety Advisory Group in January 2013, implemented a Green-Yellow-Red placarding system in January 2015 and we post inspection results on the Internet in a user-friendly interface.

**Role in Mentorship Program** BCPHD participated in the NACCHO Retail Program Standards Mentorship Program as a mentee in the fifth cohort and was mentored by Riverside County Health Department (CA).

**Lessons Learned/Tips** Our department is continuing to work on meeting Standard 6 by working with Riverside County to research and implement effective educational and enforcement strategies. We have learned the importance of a documented approach to enforcement. We have also gained a functional method for improving the cultural competency of our department.

Our agency is currently in the process of PHAB accreditation. We found that connecting FDA retail program standards and public health accreditation has helped us improve the services we provide to our community by identifying weaknesses and developing new training plans to correct these problems. FDA's retail program standards and PHAB's standards and measures complement each other; we applied our knowledge regarding the retail program standards to meet required PHAB documentation.

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## **County of El Dorado, California**

### **Background**

**State:** California

**HD Population Size Served:** 183,000

**Number of Retail Food Establishments Inspected:** 963

**Retail Program Standards Met/Working On:** Working On Standard 2 and the Self-Assessment of all nine standards.

**Enrolled in the Retail Program Standards: 2010**

**NACCHO Mentorship Program Cohort(s): 5**

The mission of El Dorado County is to protect, preserve, and enhance the public health, safety and environment through a balanced program of environmental monitoring and enforcement, innovative leadership, community education, customer service, and emergency response for the citizens of and the visitors to El Dorado County.

El Dorado County has 5 field staff Registered Environmental Health Specialists (REHS) working in the retail food program. The field staff is supervised by two Supervising REHS staff mainly due to a physical separation of the two offices by 60 miles that equates to a 90-minute drive through the mountains between Placerville and South Lake Tahoe, CA. The main office is located in Placerville which is just about 50 miles east of Sacramento, the State capital. The satellite office is located in South Lake Tahoe and touches the CA/Nevada state line. The South Lake Tahoe office is a tourist destination, having two ski resorts in our district (Heavenly and Sierra at Tahoe) and is popular for the nearby casinos on the Nevada side of the lake, though our jurisdiction does not extend into Nevada.

The entire county has approximately 963 retail food facilities comprised of restaurants, grocery stores, bars, schools, commissaries, organized camp kitchens, bed & breakfast facilities, seasonal food facilities, caterers, and cottage food operations. Our county also has numerous temporary events, a few mobile food operations and a few detention facilities. We inspect the majority of these facilities twice a year. Spanish is commonly spoken in our district and thus we have a need to prepare educational materials in both languages.

California has its own food code called "California Retail Food Code". Each county in California derives regulatory authority from this code.

### **Role in Mentorship Program**

El Dorado County is a first-time participant in the NACCHO Retail Program Standards Mentorship Program. We have been mentored by Riverside County, CA. Our county saw the need for food program standardization and decided to pursue FDA Standard 2 as our goal for the mentorship program. We appreciated being paired up with another county in CA since we are under the same regulatory authority.

### **Lessons Learned/Tips**

Our county is small in comparison to many of the other counties in CA, and as such we had a small mindset and had become comfortable with the "status quo", basically just trying to survive in completing food program inspections. Realizing the need for program improvement, specifically trained regulatory staff, we reached out to and became encouraged by Richard Ramirez, our FDA program specialist, to apply for the mentorship program. Tip: stay in touch with your FDA retail program specialist several times through the year if possible. He or she can help guide you in the program standards as well as provide training to your district.

Having a mentor allowed to get great ideas on how we could improve our own program, specifically by seeing their own program in action. We specifically saw new staff being trained for Riverside as well as San Bernardino County, their next door neighboring county that had experienced the most horrendous terrorist act one could think of on December 2, 2015, and this attack was only 5 months previous to our visit. We learned that counties help each other in times of difficulty, and we saw this in action.

Our program goal has been to develop a standardized training program, especially since we have a fair amount of staff turnover. Former staff have left for better paying positions in neighboring counties. I honestly think that now we may be able to improve our staff retention rate by having an improved training program — one that draws staff in, shows them what we are about, and makes staff feel a part of our wonderful and improved program.

Participating in the mentorship program helped us complete the self-assessment of the nine standards, and has helped us to take a critical look at our weaknesses and set goals for program improvement. Today we are not about "status quo" any longer thanks to the mentorship program! We have not yet completed Standard 2 (Trained Regulatory Staff), however we are on a path set for completion before the end of this year. One important lesson is that having a mentor helped us to share our needs and successes with our mentor and also with other districts who have reached out for help. We don't feel alone any longer. We are all in this (program improvement) together.

We took a risk. We applied for the mentorship program. We are so happy we did! We are no longer status quo!

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## **County of Lake, Environmental Health Department (CA)**

### **Background**

**State:** California

**LHD Population Size Served:** 64,665

**Number of Retail Food Establishments Inspected:** 341

**Retail Program Standards Met/Currently Working On:** 2, 5, Self-Assessment

**Enrolled in the Retail Program Standards:** 2006

Lake County is rural agricultural county located in Northwestern California. The current year-round population for the County of Lake is approximately 64,665 with significant increase of tourists and summer visitors.

The Department of Health Services, Division of Environmental Health (EH), was formed with the purpose and mission of promoting and protecting the people of Lake County through education and enforcement of public health laws. EH stands with our Public Health Division and works collaboratively with their Communicable Disease staff. EH 13.5 full time employees. Two employees with supervisory and office support are specifically dedicated to the Food Safety Program. The Food Safety Program within Lake County consists of environmental health activities that focus on the Center for Disease Control' risk factors: improper holding temperatures of potentially hazardous foods; improper cooling of potentially hazardous foods; inadequate cooking of potentially hazardous foods; poor personal hygiene of food employees; contaminated equipment; and food from unapproved sources. Other EH Programs administered include: Solid Waste, Hazardous Materials Management, Small Water Systems, Complaint Response, Land Development including water supply wells and onsite wastewater, Consumer Protection, and Emergency Response and Preparedness.

The EH has a service area that includes the incorporated Cities of Clearlake and Lakeport, and the unincorporated communities of Lower Lake, Middletown, Cobb, Lucerne, Nice, Upper Lake, Clearlake Oaks, Glenhaven, Hidden Valley Lakes, Blue Lakes, Kelseyville, and Lake Pillsbury. Within these service areas, EH has jurisdictional oversight for approximately 341 retail food facilities which serve the residents and visitors in the county.

California Health and Safety Code (Retail Food Code) provides Lake County Environmental Health Division implementation and enforcement authority.

### **Overview of Mentorship Program Participation**

County of Lake, Environmental Health Department participated in the NACCHO Retail Program Standards Mentorship Program as a mentee in the first cohort (2012). County of Lake, Environmental Health Department was mentored by Alexandria Health Department (VA).

## Mentorship Program Lessons Learned/Tips

Lessons learned was the ability to streamline processes by utilizing other agencies peer reviewed and field tested products, establishing a strong networking of peers and professional stakeholders to provide continuous support for staff, refining policies and procedures to provide more consistency and uniformity amongst staff. Finally, we quickly learned how to deal with competing priorities between regular workload and the goals and objectives of this grant.

## Project Contact

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[http://www.co.lake.ca.us/Government/Directory/Environmental\\_Health/Programs/foodsafety.htm](http://www.co.lake.ca.us/Government/Directory/Environmental_Health/Programs/foodsafety.htm)

## County of Monterey, Environmental Health Bureau (CA)

### Background

**State:** California

**LHD Population Size Served:** 415,057

**Number of Retail Food Establishments Inspected:** 3982 per year

**Retail Program Standards Met/Working On:** 2, 3, 4, 7, Self-Assessment

**Enrolled in the Retail Program Standards:** 2006

**NACCHO Mentorship Program Cohort(s):** 3

Monterey County's Environmental Health Bureau (EHB) is a mid-sized regulatory organization of serving within the local Department of Health. Along with the other Bureaus and Agencies, our collective mission statement is "Working to enhance, promote and protect the health of Monterey County's individuals, families, communities and environment". Located along the central coast region of the state, Monterey County spans 3,322 square miles, of which the majority of land use is primarily large scale farming of specialty crops and vineyards. This is especially true in the Salinas Valley (also known as the "Salad Bowl of the World") an area that contributes to a \$4 billion dollar industry. Although agricultural business stands as the leading socio-economic engine of the area, the county's retail food facility scene is a vibrant, growing and important component of the second leading industry of the area; tourism. Monterey County and cities are a destination for world-class events, activities and attractions. The Monterey Bay Aquarium alone draws up to 2 million visitors annually.

All types of retail food establishments are regulated by EHB; from Cottage Food Operations to large scale caterers and restaurants. Visitors and locals alike patronize our restaurants, markets and vendors. Although gourmet food trucks are not as prevalent in the area, lunch trucks continue to service the farm workers in the fields; farm workers who are considered to be the first food handlers of many of our edible products. Monterey County's food safety programs have the greatest potential to exemplify the Farm to Fork concept, and it is our hope that as the LHD we work to bridge the gap between the major food safety stakeholders in the area: the Ag Produce Grower / Shipper community and the Retail Food Industry.

The Environmental Health Bureau is comprised of 76 staff, 55 of which are Registered Environmental Health Specialists (REHS). 12 REHS staff is primarily tasked to apply and enforce CA State Health and Safety Code/

**California Retail Food Code (CalCode)** and Monterey County health ordinances for retail food facilities as part of the Consumer Health Protection Service (CHPS). CHPS staff is responsible for ensuring that all permitted food facilities and activities, including 1685 restaurants and 640 markets, handle food safely, with an overall goal to prevent foodborne illnesses from occurring. Although we have no jurisdictional authority over agricultural growing, shipping and processing, we continue to reach out to that community as partners in food safety.

## Role in Mentorship Program

Monterey County's Environmental Health Bureau participated in the NACCHO Retail Program Standards Mentorship Program as a mentee in third cohort and was mentored by Fairfax County Health Department (VA).

## Lessons Learned/Tips

Our FSAC (Food Safety Advisory Committee) which consists of members from the Industry, restaurant operators, and the Health Department members completed our 5th Annual Food Safety Conference on September 9 & 10, 2014. Our theme was "Code Breakers" and the attendees were from the food industry and Environmental Health Specialists from Northern and Central California.

The main focus of the Food Safety Conference is the education and training of "food Facilities" that are regulated by Monterey County Environmental Health Bureau (EHB). EHB considers this training to be "value added" for the fees that are paid by the regulated facilities and the inspectors consider the "value added" as the greater adherence and knowledge of the regulations along with "why" the regulations came into existence. FSAC and EHB's tagline for the Food Safety Conference is "**Working Together for Food Safety**" and truly EHB and the food industry work together to accomplish this goal.

On the second day of the conference an 8 hour HACCP course was offered to Environmental Health Specialist. The event was very educational and well attended.

### Lesson Learned:

This type of enterprise (planning a 8 hour conference) takes quite a bit of work and it is best to get complete buy in from the EHB CHPS staff, because they will be taking on quite a few of the tasks involved with the conference. Also, over the years we've learned to start early at least eight months in advance. The first four months will be monthly meetings to determine the theme of the conference as well as developing a Gantt chart for the planning. The Gantt chart will include the initial phase of planning and progress towards the more complicated and detailed tasks (please see attached Gantt chart). Getting closer to the conference date the meetings became biweekly with more detail planning.

### Lesson Learned:

Divide up the tasks and form subcommittees to follow through with the actions required to complete the task. These subcommittees will report back to the main committee.

### Lesson Learned:

Funding for the event is primarily carried out through soliciting sponsors and/or vendors to participate by setting up booths or informational tables. We've also had associations with the local cities and state who become partners and provide the venue for the event free of charge or at a very low rate.

### Lesson Learned:

Generally speaking the lessons learned over the last five years has been planning and keeping a schedule. It is also important to have a person in charge who is detailed oriented and keeps on task. The support of the local food industry as well as the local Food Safety Advisory Council is also necessary.

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## **Riverside County Department of Environmental Health (CA)**

### **Background**

**State:** California

**LHD Population Size Served:** 2,308,441

**Number of Retail Food Establishments Inspected:** 16,000+

**Retail Program Standards Met/Working On:** 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9

**Enrolled in the Retail Program Standards:** 2002

**NACCHO Mentorship Program Cohort(s):** 5

The mission of the Department of Environmental Health is to enhance the quality of life in Riverside County through implementation of environmental health programs that protect public health and safety as well as the environment.

The Riverside County Department of Environmental Health joined the FDA's National Voluntary Standards Program in 2002. A verification audit in March of 2005 and August 2014 deemed that the Department met Standards 3, 6, and 7.

### **Role in Mentorship Program**

Riverside County Department of Environmental Health participated in the NACCHO Retail Program Standards Mentorship Program as a mentor in the fifth cohort. Riverside County mentored both Butte County and El Dorado County.

### **Lessons Learned/Tips**

Mentoring other counties made us take a more in-depth look at our own FDA Standards plan. This experience brought confirmation that those Standards that we have worked on and/or completed have been well thought out and are relevant for use by other jurisdictions. The relationships forged will allow for continued exchange of ideas beyond the mentor/mentee period.

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## **Sacramento County Environmental Management Department (CA)**

### **Background**

**State:** California

**LHD Population Size Served:** 1,400,000

**Number of Retail Food Establishments Inspected:** 6,500  
**Retail Program Standards Met/Currently Working On:** 5, 7, Self-Assessment  
**Enrolled in the Retail Program Standards:** 2001

California's capital is the city of Sacramento, which is Sacramento County's largest city. The County of Sacramento covers about 994 square miles in the middle of the California Central Valley. The County includes seven incorporated cities, a large unincorporated area and is home to over 1.4 million people.

The Sacramento County Environmental Management Department (EMD) is a part of the Sacramento County Countywide Services Agency, which provides local, state and federally mandated services and programs to the citizens of the seven cities and the unincorporated areas of the Sacramento County. The mission of the Sacramento County **Environmental Management Department** is to protect public health and the environment. To achieve this mission, EMD provides Sacramento County businesses and residents with training, outreach, education, inspection and enforcement.

EMD is comprised of two divisions: Environmental Health and Environmental Compliance. The Environmental Health Division (EHD) is charged with overseeing several consumer protection programs, including: retail food protection, recreational health, plan review, tobacco licensing, childhood lead poisoning prevention, employee housing, detention facilities, noise abatement, and body art.

The Retail Food Protection Program includes regulatory oversight and enforcement of State and Local health codes for approximately 6,500 food facilities in Sacramento County. The enforcement of these codes is conducted through the following activities:

- Permitting and inspection of retail food businesses including restaurants, bars, markets, school cafeterias, bakeries, mini-marts and convenience stores, retail stores that sell pre-packaged food, mobile food vendors, and special/temporary event booths.
- Providing food safety education and training to improve compliance with food safety regulations and reduce the incidence of foodborne illness.
- Investigation of complaints regarding food safety and sanitation violations at retail food facilities
- Investigation of suspected cases of foodborne illness.

EHD receives no general fund monies and is fully funded through permits, paid by over 6,500 permitted retail food businesses. The Environmental Health Division currently employs 30 Environmental Specialists, two Environmental Compliance Technicians, one student intern, four Administrative Support Specialists, five Program Supervisors, one Program Manager, and one Division Chief. All Environmental Specialists are Registered Environmental Health Specialists (REHS) with the State of California Department of Public Health.

## Overview of Mentorship Program Participation

The Sacramento County Environmental Management Department participated in the NACCHO Retail Program Standards Mentorship Program as a mentee in the second cohort (2012-2013). The Sacramento County Environmental Management Department was mentored by Wake County Environmental Health Services (NC).

## Mentorship Program Lessons Learned/Tips

This grant made it possible for our department to complete work on FDA Standard 5. Sacramento County learned many valuable lessons about how to write a grant proposal, great networking experiences with NACCHO and other enrolled jurisdictions, and working on policies related to Standard 5.

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## **County of San Bernardino Department of Public Health, Division of Environmental Health Services (CA)**

### **Background**

**State:** California

**LHD Population Size Served:** 2.03 million

**Number of Retail Food Establishments Inspected:** over 94,000

**Retail Program Standards Met/Working On:** 3, 7, and Self-Assessment

**Enrolled in the Retail Program Standards:** 2012

**NACCHO Mentorship Program Cohort(s):** 4

The mission of the County of San Bernardino Department of Public Health, Division of Environmental Health Services (DEHS) is to improve the quality of life by protecting public health, promoting safety and preventing environmental hazards so those who reside, visit and invest in our county can prosper and achieve well-being. The Food Protection Section has approximately 60-70 staff. This number includes support staff such as fiscal specialists, staff analysts, office assistants, etc.

The size of the jurisdiction is 20,105 square miles. They are the largest county geographically in the contiguous United States, extending to the borders of Arizona and Nevada.

They inspect retail food establishments such as restaurants, bakeries, grocery stores, public and private school cafeterias, bars, liquor stores, juice bars, meat / seafood markets, convenience stores / gas stations, hospital cafeterias, assisted living facility cafeterias, organized camp cafeterias, farmers markets, ice cream trucks, mobile food facilities and catering trucks, temporary food facilities, cottage food operations, etc. They permit over 9,400 food facilities, and conduct more than 20,000 inspections per year. As part of their retail food regulatory program, we require that all food workers take an online training class which covers retail food safety topics and proper food handling procedures. Approximately 45,000 food workers take the San Bernardino County Food Handler Course each year. Their regulatory authority is derived from the State of California Health and Safety Code (CalCode), as well as San Bernardino County health ordinances for retail food facilities.

### **Role in Mentorship Program**

San Bernardino participated in the NACCHO Retail Program Standards Mentorship Program as a mentee in the fourth cohort. They were mentored by Fairfax County Health Department (VA).

### **Lessons Learned/Tips**

Some of the lessons learned from this project have been that it takes effort from multiple people doing a little in order to accomplish a lot in a short amount of time. We also found that having an organized and structured plan to hold staff accountable is a key to successfully meeting criteria for a certain standard. We use SharePoint to track the assignment, who it's assigned to, due date and updates on progress. This method has worked out well for us.

Another lesson learned is it takes time to go through the criteria of each standard. Some standards require compiling data and then evaluating that data over a period of time. Additionally, we learned that each of the standards is to be reassessed every 60 months or sooner if changes in the policies occur. This emphasizes the continuous improvement component for the FDA Retail Program Standards and the way they were designed.

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