

ENGAGING AND PROPELLING ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

Learning the Value of AHE Education

A Q&A with Sandra Rials, MS; compiled by Heather Williams

“Education is the most powerful weapon with which you can use to change the world.”
— *Nelson Mandela*

Here at AHE, we want to change the world. Not in the overly dramatic way, but at our core, we want to ensure that all health care environments contribute to quality outcomes and healthy communities. Seems like quite the task, doesn't it? Well, we've got the tools and resources to help you succeed. By arming you, the AHE member, with the educational tools and resources you need, we're one step closer to helping communities all across the U.S.—and world—foster healthy environments that contribute to better health outcomes.

AHE's mission is to be the to be the global authority on caring for the health care environment, and in order to provide its members with the practical tools and resources to achieve this mission, it's important that education and advancement of the profession be woven into AHE at its core.

One of the strategic themes of the 2014-2016 AHE Strategy Map is to “Advance and Promote the Profession.” A part of this theme includes providing professional development opportunities, and enhancing access to education and knowledge resources. AHE

is dedicated to providing industry-leading education and resources. To that end, it's also our duty to ensure you're aware of all the professional development opportunities you have at your fingertips as a member.

EXPLORE magazine spoke with Sandra Rials, MS, AHE director of Education about ENGAGE, AHE's education platform.

Q Who is responsible for the educational topics that AHE presents?

Throughout the year, AHE's Education and Knowledge and Management (EKM) Committee meets to nominate and recommend topics that would be of prime interest to environmental services leaders. The committee is comprised of 20-25 health care professionals from across the country and from every care setting. This group has 'their fingers on the pulse' and 'their ear to the ground' in all things germane to this profession.

Q How do you best serve members in your role as director of Education?

My job is to create a rich learning environment for members—an environment with compelling content that engages environmental services leaders. Content that is interesting, relevant, timely, and useful. I see myself, along with members of the EKM Committee, as entrusted stewards of the professional development of a community who has arguably the most significant and underappreciated jobs in health care.

I serve members by analyzing learning and information gaps, understanding

current topics and issues in the profession, and then designing instructional materials to close those gaps. My job is to continually engage our members by delivering the absolute most valuable and compelling programs available—programs that excite, inspire, and challenge.

Q What topics do members want to learn about most?

Well, the tool we most often use to assist us in understanding what members want to learn is the survey tool, and we survey often—we survey online course and webinar participants, as well as EXCHANGE attendees. Consistently, what survey findings tell us is that members want to learn more about staffing—whether it is increasing productivity or establishing standards, or best practices related to hiring, engaging, motivating, and retaining staff—it's always an area of great interest. Overall, I'd say the top-five areas that consistently show up on surveys are: staffing, infection prevention and environmental hygiene, improving HCAHPS scores, laundry and textiles, and new technology.

Q What types of education do you find most helpful for members?

I think our members learn best and are engaged more thoroughly by learning through different offerings, platforms, and delivery options. For example, one of our current board members is an avid reader and an enthusiastic learner. He suggested that we offer podcasts to our members—an excellent and very timely suggestion that

happened to align very nicely with AHE's desire to offer micro-learning.

Micro-learning is a term that's being used these days to describe the delivery of content to learners through mobile devices in very specific small bursts, such as podcasts. We now offer a series of educational podcasts through our new micro-learning platform, EXPRESS. Of course, EXPRESS podcasts are perfect to listen to through any of your mobile devices or even on your laptop or desktop. Right now through EXPRESS, we're presenting a three-part series on infection prevention. In the next few weeks we'll add more podcasts: one on leadership and another on floor care and maintenance. We look forward to presenting several additional podcasts later this year.

Q Why is EXCHANGE a not-to-miss event?

EXCHANGE brings together environmental services movers and shakers, industry front-runners, and expert thought leaders in the profession. There isn't another face-to-face event of this caliber developed specifically for professionals caring for the health care environment.

At EXCHANGE, members will find hard-hitting education sessions that speak to the highly specialized content areas relevant to them—sessions that address improving the clean and quiet HCAHPS domains, patient satisfaction, 21st Century infection prevention, effective waste removal programs, technology, and budget management. EXCHANGE even offers sessions that address effective leadership and managing human resources—all presented by renowned speakers from across the country.

In addition, there are unparalleled networking opportunities with other like-minded professionals—opportunities to share recommended practices, emerging or novel technologies, promising practices, what works what doesn't work, and other challenges and successes.

Q How do you find out which topics are of most relevance to present at EXCHANGE?

We find out from a number of different sources. First and foremost, through the EXCHANGE Planning Committee, whose members work year round and meet every

2015 ENGAGE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Visit www.ahe.org/ahe/learn/education/calendar.shtml to learn more.

EXCHANGE 2015

September 20–23
Gaylord Texan Resort
& Convention Center
Grapevine, TX

COURSES

Online courses can be accessed 24 hours a day, seven days a week from home, work, or anywhere in between. Learners have access to informative, timely, and carefully researched articles, reading materials, videos, webcasts, podcasts, and other interactive instructional materials. Together with peers, learners also complete online discussion based assignments and projects.

CHESP Study Group

February 23–April 17
April 20–June 12
June 15–August 3
October 19–November 29

Foundations for Success in Environmental Services Management

March 2–May 18
July 13–September 28

Ultimate Scores for the Ultimate Experience: How Improving Patient Satisfaction Will Improve HCAHPS

March 16–April 12
October 5–November 9

Employee Engagement: Going the Extra Mile

April 6–June 12
December 7–February 5

The Lean Management System in Health Care

April 27–June 15
July 20–September 30

Health Care Initiatives Promoting Sustainability in Environmental Services

June 1–July 19
October 12–December 27

Principles of Effective Linen Management

June 1–August 16
November 16–December 20

Essentials of Infection Prevention and Environmental Hygiene

July 6–August 24
November 9–December 28

NEW! Talent Management in Environmental Services

November 2–December 6

2015 WEBINAR SERIES

Webinars are pre-recorded available on-demand from the release date shown below through December 31, 2015.

The AHE 2015 Webinar Series provides live, interactive, and convenient continuing education for busy health care professionals looking to deepen their knowledge through up-to-minute content. Each 60-minute webinar qualifies for 1.00 hour of continuing professional education (CPE) credit.

- **February 26:** Successful Guidelines for Navigating Contracted Services and Purchasing Strategies
- **March 19:** A Framework for Managing Change
- **April 15:** Staffing Tools and Analysis: Getting the Magic Number
- **May 14:** A Collaborative Approach to Outbreak Management
- **June 18:** New Technologies Part 1: Surface Cleaning and Disinfection
- **July 23:** New Technologies Part 2: Floor Care
- **August 19:** The Nursing Unit: Friends or Foes
- **November 19:** Environmental Services Quality Control Strategies and Tools
- **December 10:** Chemicals and Safety: Best Practices and Strategies

other week to identify, evaluate, recommend, and vet topics and abstracts. Planning Committee members also work directly with speakers to refine and enhance topics, as well as presentations. Patti Costello, AHE's executive director, often reviews, evaluates, and recommends current research as potential EXCHANGE topics. We receive recommendations from the Board of Directors as well. Lastly, I try to keep myself abreast of relevant topics by reviewing resources, researching topics, and consulting with committee and board members and other knowledgeable health care professionals.

Q Let's talk more about AHE's certification credential: CHESP. What resources does AHE provide for those looking to pursue it?

We offer first-rate resources to prepare professionals for certification. Our online CHESP Study Course is an excellent way to review for the exam. We offer the course four or five times a year because it's our most popular course. We have more members enrolled in the CHESP Review Course than we do any other course. Although an online course, it's facilitated by some of AHE's most outstanding CHESP certificants.

They guide learners through each course by posting questions, answering questions, and expertly facilitating robust discussions.

The SAE (Self Assessment Exam) is also an excellent resource if preparing for the CHESP. The SAE is a 100-question online test that can help CHESP test takers gauge where they are in terms of readiness. The SAE helps learners assess their strengths as well as areas where additional preparation is needed. So, I would certainly recommend the SAE in addition to the online study course. Of course, we also offer a review course at EXCHANGE—that review course is especially helpful if a member is planning on taking the CHESP exam at EXCHANGE. Lastly, our newly updated *CHESP Prep Guide* is now available for purchase.

Q What are the primary benefits of becoming certified?

We believe the CHESP is this nation's leading credential for professionals caring for the health care environment. Achieving the CHESP essentially speaks to an environmental services professional's knowledge. It certifies that the person has amassed a body of knowledge that spans seven critical domains. And one of the great benefits of achieving the CHESP includes industry recognition of that body of knowledge. This of course often leads to increased employment opportunities, including job mobility, and greater earning power.

Q How can members make the most of the resources available to them?

Take the courses! They're free to all members—all online courses, EXPRESS podcasts, and all webinars are free. I'd say to just enroll and take the courses. They're fun, they're informative, and they are free!

And by all means, attend the EXCHANGE conferences, because not only do you get up-to-the-minute information from the many sessions presented, but you also get to connect and share with other professionals, which can be just as valuable.

I'd also advise members to check out the education section on AHE's website. And also check out Learner Community, our new learning management system. I encourage members to become a part of AHE's thriving and active community of learners and practitioners by engaging with their peers and learning from each other. ●



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