



## UNITED STATES ARMY PUBLIC HEALTH COMMAND

### Public Affairs Office

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## Epidemiology and Disease Surveillance Portfolio

### Mission

The mission of the Epidemiology and Disease Surveillance Portfolio is to study disease and injury among U.S. Army Soldiers, retirees, their families and Army civilians, and the risk factors associated with health outcomes. The portfolio does this by:

- \* Monitoring diseases and injuries diagnosed in inpatient and outpatient visits at military medical facilities to identify emerging health threats.
- \* Conducting field investigations or site visits to identify the causes of disease and injury. Making recommendations for mitigating disease and injury to appropriate leadership—those who are responsible for deciding which actions to take.
- \* Evaluating military programs to determine if they are effective at decreasing disease and injury.
- \* Preparing physicians to specialize in preventive medicine, the medical discipline that promotes good health and intervenes to preclude disease, disability and early death.

### Background

The Epidemiology and Disease Surveillance Portfolio's work represents the founding element of public health—disease prevention and control. Elements of the portfolio have existed for nearly 45 years when the Army started a residency program to train physicians in preventive medicine. The most recent addition to the portfolio — the Behavioral and Social Health Outcomes Program was formed in 2008, in response to rising suicide rates among Army personnel.

### Clients

The portfolio's clients are commanders, Army and DOD organizations, medical leaders, and deployed units. The portfolio focuses on reducing injury and disease rates among groups of people rather than individual patients.

### Structure and Organization

The Epidemiology and Disease Surveillance Portfolio is one of nine portfolios that make up the Army Institute of Public Health, a subordinate command of the U.S. Army Public Health Command. The portfolio is comprised of four programs:

\* **Disease Epidemiology Program** — This program monitors infectious and communicable diseases among Soldiers and retirees, their families and/or Army civilians, analyzing what causes them and finding ways to reduce how often they occur. By analyzing and reporting the information that individual facilities enter into a medical surveillance system, program epidemiologists can spot emerging epidemics, spikes in medical conditions that may need medical intervention, and longer-term disease trends. This surveillance helps medical providers begin to take action to stop the spread of disease, prioritize resources to address diseases that are most dangerous or costly, and identify health issues that may be specific to their communities.

\* **Injury Prevention Program** — This program has demonstrated that injuries are the leading health problem in the military, resulting in about two million visits to medical treatment facilities a year. It is the only injury epidemiology program in the DOD, and its scientists work to determine the causes of injuries and identify effective ways for unit leaders to prevent these injuries. These recommendations optimize Soldier health and readiness while minimizing injuries and resultant lost-duty days. This program is a critical component of the Soldier Medical Readiness Campaign Plan and is a nationally recognized leader in injury prevention.



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#### \* Behavioral and Social Health Outcomes Program —

After a spike in Army suicides during the Army's recent years of conflict, the BSHOP was created to conduct surveillance of behavioral health issues, currently focusing on the Army's uniformed personnel. BSHOP identifies Soldiers who are involved in negative behaviors such as suicide, homicide, alcoholism, and domestic violence and other forms of physical aggression, and examines risk factors that may contribute to these behaviors. This surveillance and analysis is reported to Army leaders and used to prioritize actions to address the factors that contribute to negative behaviors and suicide. The program also conducts field investigations at the request of commanders to gather data and assess events within a specific community where behavioral health issues occur at unusual levels.

\* **Professional Medical Education Program** — This program includes operation of one of two Army public health residencies that train up to seven physicians per year to become board-certified in preventive medicine. The program also offers two courses, the Global Medicine Course and the Military Tropical Medicine Course, which provide training for healthcare providers on deployment-related illnesses. The program supports several surveillance activities for the portfolio, including management of several disease-specific registries.

#### Epidemiology and Disease Surveillance's People

Approximately 70 people work in the Epidemiology and Disease Surveillance Portfolio. They include military and civilian personnel in a broad range of medical and scientific disciplines. Preventive medicine physicians, epidemiologists, physiologists, clinical social workers, veterinarians, psychologists, social scientists, and data management technicians are some of the occupations within the portfolio. In addition to their professional experience, most staff members hold doctoral or master's degrees. The program supplements its expertise from multidisciplinary public health experts within USAPHC and works closely with other federal partners including the Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center, Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center, Walter Reed Army Institute of Research, U.S. Army Research Institute of Environmental Medicine, U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases, Defense Safety Oversight Council, U.S. Air Force School of Aerospace Medicine, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

#### Benefits for the Army

The Epidemiology and Disease Surveillance Portfolio is dedicated to preventing disease and injury to Soldiers and retirees, their families, and Army civilians. The portfolio develops information products for providers in military medical treatment facilities and in the field, ensuring they have the latest prevention and health promotion-focused recommendations for preventing injuries and diseases. Its rapid response capabilities to address public health problems are among the most sought after services in the command. With its ongoing surveillance and analysis of disease and injury rates, the portfolio helps to maintain military readiness and contributes to the overall goal of a healthier, stronger, and more effective force.