

About Us

The Division of Health and Nutrition Examination Surveys (DHANES) is one of the survey divisions at the CDC's National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS).

DHANES is responsible for planning, operations, informatics, analysis, and reporting activities related to the family of health and nutrition examination surveys. These surveys range from the capstone cross-sectional National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, to longitudinal studies, and more recent efforts with community based studies. DHANES is comprised of more than 60 federal employees who have training and expertise in diverse areas including public health, informatics, survey methodology, and statistics. The federal staff is augmented by contractor staff working on- and offsite.

The Division consists of four branches and the Office of the Division Director. The DHANES Office of the Director coordinates the major activities in the Division. Each of the four branches consists of a multi-disciplinary team with specific duties and responsibilities.

Office of the Director

- Provides leadership, administrative and scientific support, and coordination for the Division's mission and activities within the NHANES Program.
- Coordinates the NHANES program with other programs at NCHS, within CDC and HHS, and with other Federal organizations to ensure that health and nutrition data needs for policy-making and research are met.
- Coordinates nutrition monitoring activities within HHS.
- Serves as liaison to USDA and other Federal agencies
- Represents NCHS for interagency nutrition research and nutrition policymaking purposes.
- Provides a focal point for communicating health survey knowledge and experience to our colleagues throughout the world via the World Health Organization (WHO) Collaborating Center in the non-communicable diseases program of WHO.

Analysis Branch

A team of researchers with expertise in the medical and dental sciences, nutrition, epidemiology, and health statistics coordinates NHANES data analysis activities:

- Provides statistical and scientific input for the analysis of NHANES and NHES data.

- Prepares scientific papers on the prevalence of disease or health-related characteristics, and on the relationships of these variables as observed in the United States population.
- Provides expert scientific consultation in public health research, and scientific oversight for the Division's data collection programs.
- Assists in the development, application and dissemination of analytic guidelines and methods of estimation appropriate to the Division's data collection programs
- Participates in study planning and evaluation functions as appropriate.
- Represents the Division and NCHS at professional scientific meetings, associations, and on working groups developing consensus statements and identifying need for health data.

Informatics Branch

A team of computer scientists, engineers, mathematicians, and informatics specialists carries out NHANES informatics research and development:

- Designs, develops, and implements software architecture, database design and modeling, network and telecommunications architecture.
- Provides technical oversight for contractor related NHANES informatics development.
- Performs quality assurance and control, data editing, disclosure avoidance, and preparation of datasets and documentation for public release.
- Conducts informatics based research and development, presentation of such research at major national and international meetings, and publishing findings in peer-reviewed journals.
- Provides technical assistance and consultation to university, state, and international research groups in the areas of survey informatics, metadata, quality assurance and control, survey instrumentation, and medical imaging.

Operations Branch

A team of medical doctors, nurses, statisticians, engineers, operations managers, public health analysts, and program assistants carries out NHANES data collection activities:

- Develops and monitors data collection contracts, including those for building and maintaining mobile examination centers, acquiring biomedical instruments and equipment, and processing and analyzing laboratory data.

- Works closely with the Planning Branch and the data collection contractor to evaluate the operational feasibility of proposed NHANES examination components and equipment to assure that the survey meets the highest standards of data quality
- Develops outreach programs and materials that help convey the importance of participating in NHANES to survey respondents and community leaders alike. Personal contact with public health directors and other local leaders at each survey site enhances the community relations once the survey arrives in an area.
- Communicates with survey participants as a key element of survey operations by reporting examination findings, initiating referrals, and responding to inquiries.
- Conducts studies of operational methods, participating in longitudinal aspects of past NHANES, and prepares papers on methodological issues.

Planning Branch

A team of researchers with expertise in the medical sciences, epidemiology, social science, survey and statistical methodology, and nutrition coordinates planning activities for all NHANES interview, laboratory, and examination components:

- Develops survey content collaboratively with federal and non-government health agencies and organizations contributing to the planning process.
- Coordinates review of formal research proposals from the public health community biannually to determine survey content.
- Works closely with the Operations Branch staff and survey partners to develop survey protocols, pretest questionnaire and examination components, and coordinate data processing and reporting activities.
- Travels to survey field sites to monitor data collection and evaluates response rates and data quality.
- Presents NHANES research at major national and international meetings and publishes findings in peer-reviewed journals.
- Provides technical assistance and consultation to university, state, and international research groups in the areas of NHANES health assessment, data analysis, and survey planning, and survey methodology.