

Master of Public Health Program

2008-2009

Practicum Resource Guide

Information for:

Current Students
Faculty Advisors
Host Sites/Preceptors

Produced by:

Colorado School of Public Health
Practicum Program-Center for Public Health Practice
303.724.4456 (p)
303.724.4620 (f)
Colorado.SPH@UCDenver.edu

Table of Contents

MPH Practicum Resource Guide.....	2
Purpose of Public Health Practice	2
How the Practicum Fits into the Academic Curriculum.....	2
Prerequisites:.....	3
Goals of the Practicum Experience.....	3
Practicum Requirements and Structure.....	3
Requirements	3
Structure	4
Linkage of Practicum with Master’s Project.....	4
Practicum Placement.....	5
Setting-Up Practicum Placement.....	5
Placement Proposal Forms & Agreement Letters.....	6
Practicum Waiver Policy	6
Responsibilities of Preceptor and Host Sites	6
Preceptor and Host Site Benefits	7
For More Information Contact:.....	7
Appendix A	8
University of Colorado Denver MPH Competencies	8
BASIC PUBLIC HEALTH SCIENCE SKILLS	8
RESEARCH DESIGN AND ANALYTIC ASSESSMENT SKILLS.....	9
COMMUNICATION AND CULTURAL COMPETENCY SKILLS.....	9
PUBLIC HEALTH ETHICS	10
FINANCIAL PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT SKILLS	10
Concentration Competencies.....	10
[A] MPH in Applied Biostatistics Concentration.....	10
[B] MPH in Community and Behavioral Health Concentration	11
[C] MPH in Environmental/Occupational Health Concentration	11
[D] MPH in Epidemiology Concentration	12
[E] MPH in Health Systems, Management and Policy Concentration.....	12
Appendix B.....	14
Ten Essential Public Health Services.....	14

MPH Practicum Resource Guide

Purpose of Public Health Practice

Public health is a broad social enterprise that seeks to extend the benefits of current knowledge in ways that will have the maximum impact on the health status of a population. It does so by identifying problems that call for collective action to protect, promote, and improve health. Public health is unique in its interdisciplinary approach and methods, its emphasis on preventative strategies, its linkage with government and political decision-making, and its dynamic adaptation to new problems placed on its agenda.

(Turnock, BJ, Public Health: *What it is and how it works*, 2004)

In order to become an effective public health professional, students of public health need the opportunity to apply knowledge, theories, and skills learned in their academic courses. The MPH practicum makes this linkage by providing students the opportunity to integrate and apply the lessons learned in the classroom into a public health setting. During the practicum, the student will work on a defined public health project and be mentored by a public health professional currently practicing in the field.

Although, each student will have a different experience, the goal of the practicum is for the student to practice the public health competencies by working onsite in an approved public health setting as a part of the organization's team to address a critical health issue.

This packet will serve as your resource to understand the general guidelines for participating in the CSPH's MPH practicum.

If you are a **student** and need any further support please contact your concentration director, faculty advisor or the MPH practicum coordinator.

If you are a **host site and/or preceptor** and need any further information or support please contact the MPH practicum coordinator.

How the Practicum Fits into the Academic Curriculum

To support student success as a public health practitioner, a series of 6 credit hours are interwoven throughout the core curriculum. These 6 credit hours are designed to build upon one another to provide students with foundational information and skills that will support and enhance their professional abilities. These 6 credit hours consist of the following courses:

Foundations of Public Health Course (2 credit hours)

MPH Practicum Experience (2 credit hours)

Culminating Experience – Master’s Project (2 credit hours)

Prerequisites:

In order to sign up for a practicum experience students must do the following:

- 1) Successfully complete the Foundations of Public Health Course (this does not apply to transition students)
- 2) Successfully complete 18 credits including a minimum of three of the core courses
- 3) Gain approval of concentration director

Goals of the Practicum Experience

All MPH concentrations in the Colorado School of Public Health require students to successfully complete a practicum experience in which the student demonstrates competencies and integrates public health knowledge. The goals of the practicum are:

- Apply classroom theory, knowledge, skills and techniques to a professional work setting;
- Enhance and develop new skills needed to function as a professional in a public health setting;
- Work on a specifically defined public health problem or issue project that is of value to the preceptor site;
- Participate in a setting that allows the student to explore future career decisions;
- Engage in professional self-assessment and personal reflection;
- Build a personal network of professional leaders in public health;
- Connect with local and state public health agencies and other community-based organizations, which serve the public’s health to create support for the public health community and future recruitment opportunities.

Practicum Requirements and Structure

Requirements

- 1) 120 hours (minimum)
- 2) A pre-defined project that assists an organization in addressing an unmet need while supporting student growth in developing skills in public health practice
- 3) Preceptor site approval from concentration director and practicum coordinator

Structure

- **Timeframe:** A student signed up for practicum experience must complete 120 hours (minimum) in a public health setting. The School recognizes that many of our students have obligations with family or employment that limits the number of hours per week they can dedicate to the practicum experience. Therefore, students can complete the required 120 hours in as short as 3 weeks or as long as 2 semesters. If a student needs more time to complete the program than 2 semesters, the MPH practicum coordinator should be consulted.
- **Online component:** There will be an on line class component that will serve to connect student learning and provide opportunity for cross discussions.
- **Minimum hours:** It is recognized that more than 120 hours may be necessary to accomplish the joint goals of the student and preceptor. Therefore, it is likely that more than 120 hours will be negotiated for individual projects.

Linkage of Practicum with Master's Project

A student may choose to link their practicum experience with his/her Master's Project. For example, during the practicum the student might begin an extended project that requires considerably more than the minimum 120 hours for completion and culminates in a product that meets the requirements for the Master's Project. This possibility should be explored between the preceptor and the student at the time that the practicum experience is defined, although in some cases the possibility for a Master's Project may be identified during (rather than prior to) the practicum experience.

The culminating experience for the MPH program is a Master's Project that benefits the community or a particular target population, such as a program plan or program evaluation, capacity building project, policy initiative or a research oriented project, such as work on a publishable paper or grant. The project will most often be connected to the practicum experience by addressing a need identified by the host site. The project should relate to a student's academic goals and professional interests, and demonstrate the student's ability to work independently at the master's level. The final product will be a 15-20-page paper that demonstrates the student's ability to bring together the many facets of his/her learning from the MPH program in a prescribed format. The student will also present his/her experience in the form of an oral or poster presentation for the site in which the project was completed, as well as for faculty and classmates.

Students develop and complete a Master's Project proposal in consultation with faculty and the site preceptor. Students who choose a research-oriented project must have completed a Research Methods course. A student's Master's Project is supervised by:

- 1) A faculty member from the student's designated department and;
- 2) The site preceptor to provide ongoing support and guidance to students during the project. Other CSPH faculty can act as additional resources during the project.

Practicum Placement

Since each student has different interests and skills, the practicum experience will be created as a unique, specialized assignment. Students will be matched with preceptors. The placement of students will be flexible, but the following guidelines will be used to assess appropriateness of practice placement:

- Requires students to apply graduate level competencies
- Engages students in addressing a specific public health issue in a field setting
- Advances students' competencies and knowledge in public health practice
- Exposes students to the ten Essential Services of Public Health
- Has specific, defined project goals with deliverables
- Has a realistic time frame that is appropriate for a student to manage based upon their unique skills and knowledge
- Has a preceptor who has appropriate training to 1) oversee the project, 2) willing to agree to responsibilities outlined in the project contract, 3) is approved by the MPH practicum coordinator
- Enhances the students' professional network, career potential and professional development

See appendix A for Competencies

See appendix B for Ten Essential Services of Public Health

(It is understood that all competencies and essential services of public health will not be addressed during the practicum. However, the student is expected to observe, understand, and participate in any of them where possible.)

Setting-Up Practicum Placement

The responsibility of creating an exceptional practicum experience ultimately relies on the student. However, the student is not alone in this pursuit. The student will work closely with their concentration director and the MPH practicum coordinator to receive support and guidance to ensure a growth experience.

To start the placement process a student should:

- Review practicum requirements
- Meet with concentration director to receive approval to sign up for the practicum
- Meet with the MPH practicum coordinator to discuss student interest and opportunities available at preceptor sites
- Create a student profile packet for the preceptor site (to include a current vitae, a letter of interest & practicum goals, and a skills assessment)

Placement Proposal Forms & Agreement Letters

Practicum Checklist

Letter of Agreement

Learning Plan

Student Skills Assessment

Practicum Waiver Policy

“A planned, supervised and evaluated practical experience is an essential component of a professional public health degree program.”¹ The Colorado School of Public Health embraces the value of the practicum experience as an integral part of the overall student educational program and does not anticipate exempting any professional student from the practicum experience.

¹ From CEPH Accreditation Criteria: Schools of Public Health, Amended June 2005

Responsibilities of Preceptor and Host Sites

The goal of the practicum is to help grow the student personally and professional for a career in the field of public health. The experience is intended to provide students with an opportunity to develop professional skills in a public health setting while contributing to the needs of an organization. The school recognizes that this goal needs the support and commitment from community partners that are practicing public health in various settings. The primary responsibilities of a host site and preceptor are to:

- Work with students to develop a realistic graduate level project within the practicum time commitment and student schedule
- Provide the student with a background about the organization and project
- Be available to meet with student, provide supervision, and feedback
- Provide resources for students to complete project (i.e. office space, computer, access to data)
- Provide written feedback for the student and the school by completing evaluation forms midway through practicum (after 60 hours completed) and a final evaluation
- Support students in professional development activities (i.e. include in staff meetings, introduce organizational leaders, invite to professional events)

Preceptor and Host Site Benefits

The practicum experience has great value to the student's development and having a student professional also provides benefits to the host organization.

- Students complete or conduct projects the organization may not have capacity to do
- Students provide an inquisitive approach and may provide creative ideas and solutions
- Students build professional capacity and may be recruited to become part of organization's workforce
- Organizations and preceptors have an impact on the field of public health by participating in the education of future professionals

For More Information Contact:

Jan L. Gascoigne, Ph.D., CHES
MPH Practicum Coordinator
Colorado School of Public Health
Jan.Gascoigne@ucdenver.edu
303.724.4456

Appendix A

University of Colorado Denver MPH Competencies

BASIC PUBLIC HEALTH SCIENCE SKILLS

1. Define, assess and report on the physical and mental health status of populations, determinants of health and illness, and factors contributing to health promotion and disease prevention.
(Explanation: Determinants of health include physical, economic, social and policy environments, personal traits (including demographic factors), health status, and the use of health services. Factors contributing to health promotion and disease prevention include behavioral and lifestyle choices and personal values and beliefs about health and the use of health services.)
2. Demonstrate an understanding of the implications of genetics (the study of single genes and their functions) and genomics (the study of the entire human genome) on the health of populations.
3. Demonstrate an understanding of the effects of markets and political processes on the allocation of resources to health services and public health programs.
4. Demonstrate an understanding of the theoretical foundations of social and behavior change.
5. Demonstrate an understanding of factors influencing access to and utilization of health services.
6. Analyze the historical development, organization, financing and delivery of public and private health services in the U.S. system.
7. Identify and interpret public health laws, regulations, and policies related to specific health programs and the delivery of health services.
8. Demonstrate an understanding of tools used to analyze public policy issues.
9. Assess and explain the effects of policy development and implementation at all levels (federal, state, local) on the practice of public health.
10. Analyze health policy issues, including the health, fiscal/economic, administrative, legal, social, ethical and political implications. Include in the analysis an awareness of issues that transcend national boundaries and/or have global implications.
11. Demonstrate an understanding of the relationship of public health to the health care delivery system and the economic factors influencing components of the delivery system.
(Explanation: Components of the delivery system include organization, management, financing, and resources (workforce, facilities, technology, and knowledge).)
12. Evaluate the social and community factors related to the health of communities, assess community health needs, and identify potential interventions that consider unique cultural settings.

(Explanation: Introduces a sociocultural systems approach for exploration and conceptualization of problems of human health, disease, and illness. The interplay of biological, psychosocial, sociocultural and ecological factors is addressed.)

13. Identify environmental and occupational risks, diseases, and injuries in select populations. Identify and apply appropriate methods to study these risks, diseases, and injuries.
14. Demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the environment and the health of the public.
15. Identify, retrieve, and synthesize current scientific evidence relevant to health and public health issues.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND ANALYTIC ASSESSMENT SKILLS

16. Define a problem and specify a research question.
17. Identify and evaluate appropriate study designs to answer research questions.
18. Compare strengths and limitations of various study designs with consideration for the practical limitations, chance findings, selection bias, misclassification, and confounding.
19. Identify relevant and appropriate data and information sources.
20. Evaluate integrity and comparability of data.
21. Determine uses and limitations of quantitative and qualitative data.
22. Apply data collection processes, information technology applications and computer system storage strategies to research projects.
23. Apply ethical principles to collection, maintenance, and dissemination of data.
24. Identify and evaluate a range of approaches that can be used to address public health questions, including geographic information systems, medical informatics and bioinformatics strategies, and community-based participatory research.
25. Select and define variables and apply appropriate statistical techniques in order to answer research questions.
26. Make relevant and appropriate inferences from data

COMMUNICATION AND CULTURAL COMPETENCY SKILLS

27. Communicate effectively both in writing and orally.
28. Effectively present accurate demographic, statistical, programmatic and scientific information for professional and lay audiences.
29. Work collaboratively in a culturally sensitive manner with heterogeneous groups to promote the health of communities.

PUBLIC HEALTH ETHICS

30. Identify and address ethical issues that arise in public health practice and research.
31. Create a culture of ethical standards within organizations and communities.

FINANCIAL PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT SKILLS

32. Develop and present a budget and budget justification for a research protocol or a proposed public health program.
33. Prepare proposals for external sources of funding.
34. Recognize and apply the basic principles of supervision and personnel management.
35. Utilize leadership, team building, negotiation, and conflict resolution skills to build partnerships for the purpose of improving the public's health.
36. Identify organizational decision-making structures, stakeholders, style and processes.

Adopted Fall Quarter 2004

Revised as per MSPH Policy Committee meeting 12/14/2004

Concentration Competencies

[A] MPH in Applied Biostatistics Concentration

Competencies

Based on ASPH recommended MPH competencies for Biostatistics.

1. Describe the roles biostatistics serves in the discipline of public health.
2. Distinguish among the different measurement scales and the implications for selection of statistical methods to be used based on these distinctions.
3. Apply descriptive techniques commonly used to summarize public health data.
4. Describe basic concepts of probability, statistical probability distributions.
5. Apply common statistical methods for inference.
6. Describe preferred methodological alternatives to commonly used statistical methods when assumptions are not met.
7. Apply descriptive and inferential methodologies according to the type of study design for answering a particular research question.
8. Interpret results of statistical analyses found in public health studies.
9. Develop written and oral presentations based on statistical analyses for both public health professionals and educated lay audiences.
10. Apply basic informatics techniques with vital statistics and public health records in the description of public health characteristics and in public health research and evaluation.

[B] MPH in Community and Behavioral Health Concentration

Competencies

Based on ASPH recommended MPH competencies for Community and Behavioral Health. Additional competencies defined in specific courses.

1. Describe the role of social and community factors in both the onset and solution of public health problems.
2. Identify the causes of social and behavioral factors that affect health of individuals and populations.
3. Identify basic theories, concepts and models from a range of social and behavioral disciplines that are used in public health research and practice.
4. Apply ethical principles to public health program planning, implementation and evaluation.
5. Specify multiple targets and levels of intervention for social and behavioral science programs and/or policies.
6. Identify individual, organizational, and community concerns, assets, resources and deficits for social and behavioral science interventions.
7. Apply evidence-based approaches in the development and evaluation of social and behavioral science interventions.
8. Describe the merits of social and behavioral science interventions and policies.
9. Describe steps and procedures for the planning, implementation and evaluation of public health programs, policies and interventions.
10. Identify critical stakeholders for the planning, implementation and evaluation of public health programs, policies and interventions.

[C] MPH in Environmental/Occupational Health Concentration

Competencies

- 1) Know the biologic mechanisms for the health and environmental effects of common toxic agents and the genetic, physiologic, and psychosocial factors that affect susceptibility to adverse health outcomes from these agents.
- 2) Know the ways by which humans can be exposed to toxic agents and encounter hazards in natural and man-made environments and in the workplace, and how to apply principles of ecology, engineering, and industrial hygiene to reduce or prevent them.
- 3) Be able to apply methods of epidemiology and risk assessment to assess the potential health effects from toxic agents and hazards in the environment and workplace, know how to communicate research findings to the public and to manage the reduction of health risks to workers and the general public.
- 4) Know the laws, regulations, policies and practices that are used to inform the public and protect the environment and human health at local, state, national and international levels.

- 5) Understand the concepts of sustainability and environmental justice, and how they can be included in solutions to problems in environmental and occupational health.
- 6) Be familiar with the appropriate public health responses to environmental and occupational emergencies and disasters.

[D] MPH in Epidemiology Concentration

Competencies

Based on ASPH recommended MPH competencies for Epidemiology. Additional competencies defined in focus areas and specific courses.

1. Explain the importance of epidemiology for informing scientific, ethical, economic and political discussion of health issues.
2. Describe a public health problem in terms of magnitude, person, time and place.
3. Apply basic terminology and definitions of epidemiology.
4. Identify key sources of data for epidemiologic purposes.
5. Calculate basic epidemiology measures.
6. Evaluate the strengths and limitations of epidemiologic reports.
7. Draw appropriate inferences from epidemiologic data.
8. Communicate epidemiologic information to lay and professional audiences.
9. Comprehend basic ethical legal principles pertaining to the collection, maintenance, use and dissemination of epidemiologic data.
10. Identify the principles and limitation of public health screening programs.

[E] MPH in Health Systems, Management and Policy Concentration

Competencies

1. Demonstrate an understanding of markets and political processes on the allocation of resources to health services and public health programs.
2. Demonstrate an understanding of factors influencing access to and utilization of services.
3. Analyze the historical development, organization, financing, and delivery of public and private health services in the U.S. system.
4. Identify and interpret public health laws, regulations, and policies related to specific health programs and the delivery of health services.
5. Demonstrate an understanding of tools used to analyze public policy issues.
6. Assess and explain the effects of policy development and implementation at all levels (federal, state, local) on the practice of public health.
7. Analyze health policy issues, including the health, fiscal/economic, administrative, legal, social, ethical and political implications. Include in the analysis an awareness of issues that transcend the local boundaries and/or have global health implications.

8. Demonstrate an understanding of the relationship of public health to the health care delivery system and the economic factors influencing components of the delivery system.
9. Identify and address ethical issues that arise in public health practice and research.
10. Create a culture of ethical standards within organizations and communities.
11. Develop and present a budget and budget justification for a research protocol or a proposed public health program.
12. Recognize and apply the basic principles of supervision and personnel management.
13. Utilize leadership, team building, negotiation, and conflict resolution skills to build partnerships for the purpose of improving the public's health.
14. Identify organizational decision-making structures, stakeholders, style and processes.

Appendix B

Ten Essential Public Health Services

- 1) Monitor health status to identify and solve community health problems.
- 2) Diagnose and investigate health problems and health hazards in the community.
- 3) Inform, educate, and empower people about health issues.
- 4) Mobilize community partnerships and action to identify and solve health problems.
- 5) Develop policies and plans that support individual and community health efforts.
- 6) Enforce laws and regulations that protect health and ensure safety.
- 7) Link people to needed personal health services and assure the provision of health care when otherwise unavailable.
- 8) Assure competent public and personal health care workforce.
- 9) Evaluate effectiveness, accessibility, and quality of personal and population-based health services.
- 10) Research for new insights and innovative solutions to health problems.

National Public Health Performance Standards Program

<http://www.cdc.gov/od/ocphp/nphpsp/EssentialPHServices.htm>

5/20/08