

Final Summary Report

HST 4275- Health Studies Internship

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Table of Content

Structure and Function of Agency.	3
Description of Experiences and Activities.	5
Perceptions and Judgments about the Internship.	6

Structure and Function of Agency

The Cook County Department of Public Health (CCDPH) is one of seven operating units of the Cook County Health and Hospitals System. The CCDPH services as the Public Health Department for Suburban Cook County, which includes 2.2 million suburban residents.

Here at the CCDPH Oak Park building we house many different departments. Some of the department that works within the Lake building is: Communicable Diseases, Community Epidemiology & Health Planning, Community Preparedness and Coordination Unit, Environmental Health, Families and Communities, Health Clinics, and Policy Development & Communication.

Fortunately for me, I had the opportunity to work within all departments of the CCDPH. Working in the Policy Development & Communication Department gave me the opportunity to come in contact with all of the department one way or another. My internship focused on the Communication side. I worked my supervisor Amy Poore to find out what new things were happening in each unit. I had a chance to work on the CCDPH website. I attend Senior Executive meeting, as well of all the other staff meetings that took place.

One unit that I had the pleasure to work with was the Health Planning unit. They gave me the opportunity to attend several workshops they were apart of. I also was given the opportunity to sit in on meetings relating to the publication of the School Health Material Packet. I learned what type of information they supply to the community in forms of fairs, forums, or publications. They helped me understand what exactly a Health

Educator does. They also have separate research projects they work on to help the community.

All of the other different units come together in a monthly Executive staff meeting where they report what things each unit is working on. These meeting helped keep all the other units updated. These are a great thing, because in order for the CCDPH to succeed they need to communicate and collaborate with each other. Most of the units seem to collaborate with each other when taking on different project to better the health for suburban Cook County residents.

Description of Experiences and Activities

Overall I think my experience with the CCDPH has been a very positive one. I have learned so many different things being here. Each unit has been very helpful in sitting with me, and having a one on one meeting with me about what goes on in the unit. Each unit has contributed to me learning different things over the summer.

Here in the Communications Unit, my internship has consisted of working on the CCDPH website. I was kind of worried about this because this was not exactly what I went to school for. I have done some major projects for CCDPH. I was able to archive, and put up all the annual reports from 1941-2002. I have also helped create a links page that was missing from the website. I also update all the reportable diseases, and link those diseases to CDC pages. I came up with a frequently asked questions page, but I am waiting for the web contractors to redo the page for that so it can be posted.

I also had the opportunity to put out a few press releases for the CCDPH. One of them was for the number change for the West Clinic. I also help come up with a press release to send to local community calendars to inform them about events coming up in the future.

Perceptions and Judgments about the Internship

I think that working at the CCDPH helped open my eyes. This is a wonderful public health department. They are responsible for the well-being for 2.2 million people. Being here has made me realize that I do want to work in public health. I am surrounded around a bunch of people that really love what they do. One perk to working here is they give you the opportunity to move around in different units if there is an opening. That means you never have to stay in a unit forever unless that is what you want to do.

The skills that I have learned in the HST department have come into play yet. I used some of my skills to write press releases which are so important to get the message out to your target audience. I am pretty sure that other things help me out, but it is different to take those tools you learned and apply it to real life. There are still some things that I would need to learn, but that comes with experience. I don't think that I will never use the skills I learned in future, but right now I did not need them all. Once I get a full time position I will use some skills that I learned. On thing that I do think the HST prepared me for was going on to receive my masters in public health through UIC.

I think that the Cook County Department of Public Health is a great place for students to intern at. I had a chance to do so many hands on activities for them. I think that having the hands on experience is the best thing that could ever happen. Not to mention being able to say you interned here will look good on a resume. So for people who want to go into public health, interning at a health department which is well known will always be a great thing.