

Maternal and Child Health

Assignment Description:

The Louisiana Bureau of Family Health is located in the historic city of New Orleans. The city offers a strong sense of community with culturally diverse experiences unlike other places. This experience includes world-renowned music, dining, and festivals, with many opportunities to enjoy the arts, history, sporting events, and many family friendly events.

The Bureau of Family Health (formerly separate MCH and Family Planning Programs) of the Louisiana Office of Public Health, Department of Health and Hospitals offers a multi-disciplinary team approach to using data driven decisions to guide program activities and policy. Within the Bureau of Family Health, DAT epidemiologists provide superior support and expertise on data use, analysis, and translation for all Bureau of Family Health staff and partners. As part of that effort, the SSDI initiative provides specific focus on data linkages, data analyses, and development of life course performance metrics.

The fellow will have the opportunity to attend local trainings and meetings in line with fellowship goals. Specifically, the CSTE fellow will be required to attend a cross-departmental and multi-agency epidemiologic meeting lead by the CDC assignee every other Thursday. Regular attendees include epidemiologists from DAT, the Governor initiated Birth Outcomes Initiative data staff, children with special health care needs, birth defects, hearing speech and vision, chronic disease, and injury programs as well as partner epidemiologists from the Louisiana Public Health Institute, Louisiana State University School of Public Health, and Tulane School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine. The fellow will also be encouraged to attend at least quarterly trainings offered in-house or through the Tulane MCH Leadership Training grant as well as local stakeholder meetings where epidemiologic data are presented. An example of such a meeting is the annual Louisiana Maternal and Child Health Coalition Meeting which takes place in the Spring and is usually held in New Orleans. This meeting, which focuses more on policy and results of data-driven decision making to promote health in Louisiana, brings together MCH stakeholders from all over the State and often includes guest speakers from AMCHP and other national MCH organizations. Another meeting that occurs less frequently is the state-wide Fetal and Infant Mortality Review meeting. Dr. Ira Chasnoff and Dr. Michael Lu are two examples of national speakers who have been guest speakers at this Louisiana conference in the past. With these and other meetings, the fellow will have many opportunities to network and get to know MCH Leaders.

Opportunities for outbreak investigations are available through the State Infectious Disease program, headed by the State Epidemiologist. This program routinely hosts EIS officers and other trainees through various national programs. The State Infectious Disease Program is also responsible for assuring the appropriate investigation of any suspected outbreak or cluster state-wide. Bureau of Family Health DAT epidemiologists actively participate in outbreak and cluster investigations related to reproductive health and pregnancy outcomes. In the past few years, the Bureau of Family Health has assisted with cluster investigations into fetal losses, gastroschisis cases, and anencephaly cases in varying geographic regions of Louisiana. Opportunities to complete this competency for the CSTE fellow do not need to be limited to the MCH field, as the Infectious Disease Program oversees all outbreak and cluster investigations occurring in the State.

The proposed mentors are committed to facilitating the best possible experience for the fellow to maximize professional development. Long-term placement of a successful fellow in the Bureau of Family Health DAT unit will be sought.

Day-to-Day Activities:

The CSTE fellow will be part of the Data Action Team (DAT) and will have opportunities to become familiar with the entire scope of work performed in the DAT Unit and Louisiana Bureau of Family Health. Daily activities will include participating in a few projects of interest to the fellow, including design, analysis, and translation of analytic or evaluation studies. DAT epidemiologists routinely meet or exceed all data needs of Bureau of Family Health program staff, assuring that students and fellows are afforded the opportunity to pursue interests that promote their individual interests and training goals. The fellow will be expected to attend Bureau of Family Health staff meetings that foster a collaborative and/or learning environment, such as the quarterly Bureau of Family Health staff meeting, where important and emerging topics relevant to MCH populations are discussed. The fellow will also be encouraged to attend as many trainings and stakeholder meetings as feasible, while allowing sufficient time to complete CSTE competencies and projects.

Potential Projects:

Both mentors strongly support the selection of specific projects based on the individual fellow's interests and goals. These may include both topic interests as well as skills interests, such as specific software or analysis techniques. The following list indicates examples of projects that would be available in Louisiana that could be refined based on specific interest:

- conduct data linkages and analyses using Vital Records birth – death – fetal death and Medicaid, WIC, PRAMS, and other program data to investigate racial disparities;
- investigate patterns of NICU stays of infants delivered at 37 – 38 completed weeks gestation. Identify characteristics of infants admitted to the NICU including hospital length of stay and cost analyses.
- link and analyze Vital Records birth-hospital discharge data to compare occurrence of elective deliveries at less than 39 weeks gestation (Louisiana modified its 2003 revision of the US standard birth certificate in March 2012 to directly capture reasons for indicated deliveries at less than 39 weeks gestation)
- work with Census and Louisiana program data to simultaneously investigate individual and group level factor contributions to poor birth outcomes using multi-level modeling;
- analyze surveillance data to develop risk profiles for teen pregnancy to help guide family planning interventions;
- use GIS mapping techniques to overlay various risk factors with poor birth outcomes, and
- analyze Youth Risk Behavior data (YRBS) to characterize and define high-risk students who use tobacco, alcohol, and other substances.

Existing surveillance systems available for evaluation include the Louisiana Birth Defects Monitoring Network (LBDMN), Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS), Pregnancy Associated Mortality Review (PAMR), Child death review (CDR), and Feto-infant Mortality Review (FIMR). These data collection systems have been operational for at least four years, and only PRAMS has been evaluated in the past two or more years. Reports from previous evaluations of LBDMN and PRAMS are available for review.

Preparedness Role:

Bureau of Family Health staff routinely collaborate with the State emergency preparedness committee, and the fellow will be encouraged to attend planning meetings and complete four FEMA emergency and disaster planning trainings. The Office of Public Health wrote and accepted an emergency preparedness policy to address continuity of operations (COOP plan) in future emergency or health outbreak situations. The MCH program previously participated in this plan by identifying specific activities for

which the former MCH program would maintain responsibility for in any future emergency. One role of the fellow might be to review this document and make recommendations for any changes appropriate for the Bureau of Family Health based on current policy and/or any available national recommendations.

Assignment Location: New Orleans, LA

Primary Mentor: Lyn Kieltyka, PhD, MPH
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Secondary Mentor: Tri Tran, MD, MPH
MCH Senior Epidemiologist
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