

Maternal and Child Health

Assignment Description:

The Washington State Department of Health (DOH) proposes placing a CSTE Fellow with the Maternal and Child Health Assessment Unit of the Surveillance and Evaluation Section to focus primarily on analyzing and presenting data on priority issues of the tribes in Washington State to include those of the American Indian Health Commission (AIHC). The AIHC is a tribally-driven non-profit organization that works to improve health outcomes for American Indians and Alaska Natives. The AIHC works on behalf of the 29 federally recognized tribes and two Urban Indian Health Organizations in Washington. American Indians and Alaska Natives experience some of the poorest outcomes and most extreme health disparities in maternal and infant health in the state. In 2010, the AIHC completed a Tribal Maternal and Infant Health Strategic Plan which identified reducing infant mortality, low birth weight, high birth weight, and teen births, and increasing breastfeeding as priorities. In addition, immunizations are highlighted as a key strategy for reducing infant mortality. For this assignment, the Fellow would engage in work driven by the tribes and the AIHC, and would develop resources for the tribes to use to monitor maternal and infant health status over time. In addition to developing technical competencies, the Fellow would learn about government to government relations, and develop knowledge and understanding about working with the sovereign nations in Washington.

MCHAS has been collaborating with the AIHC as part of a Tribal Flu PRAMS grant Washington received in April 2011. The grant objectives include 1) creating a Tribal Flu Steering Committee (TSC) to address vaccination coverage and experience with influenza; 2) to work through the TSC to develop an analysis and dissemination plan to address Washington Tribal priorities related to immunizations and pregnant women; 3) to analyze 2009-2011 American Indian and Alaska Native PRAMS data to understand H1N1 vaccination, influenza experience, and other perceptions and experiences around pregnancy; 4) to work with the AIHC and TSC to disseminate results of analyses, and 5) to enhance PRAMS and tribal collaborations through data presentations and identification of measures to improve response rates. This Fellowship would further the goal of enhancing current and future collaborations and coordinating data analysis and use for improving Tribal Maternal and Child Health in Washington.

Day-to-Day Activities:

The placement offers an opportunity for the Fellow to become immersed in issues of importance to American Indians and Alaska Natives in Washington related to MCH epidemiology. The Fellow will be actively engaged in working with the tribes and the AIHC in developing and planning research projects and potentially conducting program evaluations. The Fellow will support the Washington Dept of Health in providing analytic and epidemiologic support to the AIHC and tribes on a regular basis. There will be frequent opportunities to meet and consult with colleagues to review collaborative projects, present materials, and gather feedback. The Fellow will also meet regularly with the mentors to review approaches, discuss questions or challenges, and to learn about the Health Department and its work with the AIHC and tribes. The Fellow will participate fully in assessment activities, including monthly staff meetings and data committee meetings, Department of Health brown bag seminars, trainings, advisory committees and other workgroups. The Fellow may also have the opportunity to attend state and regional conferences making presentations to both professional and lay audiences.

Potential Projects:

The projects identified for this practicum will be driven by tribal need as identified in the Tribal Maternal and Infant Health Strategic Plan, and through further collaboration with the AIHC and the Tribal Maternal and Infant Health Workgroup. Potential projects might look like:

- Evaluation of current Child Death Review for surveillance of American Indian and Alaska Native unexpected deaths and recommendations regarding American Indian/Alaska Native-specific child death review.
- Working with the AIHC and Tribal Maternal and Infant Health Workgroup to develop a regular surveillance report for the American Indian and Alaska Native population to track trends and identify issues of concern for the MCH population using existing databases: vital statistics, PRAMS, Healthy Youth Survey.
- Exploring unintended injury hospitalizations and deaths and risk factors among American Indian/Alaska Native infants and young children using the birth events records database.
- Using PRAMS data to explore a priority maternal health outcome such as prenatal vitamin use, smoking, breastfeeding initiation, or postpartum depression, and risk and protective factors
- Using Healthy Youth Survey data to explore a priority adolescent health issue such as physical activity, nutrition, asthma or bullying and associated risk and protective factors.
- Using Vital Statistics or hospitalization data to explore a priority health issue for the tribes.
- Analyzing the impact of different race/ethnic classifications on birth outcomes and using the information to make a policy recommendation.
- Analyzing infant death data from vital statistics records and Child Death Review and using the information to develop prevention priorities.
- Researching surveillance options to assess the health of young American Indian and Alaska Native children and using the information to put together a proposal for implementation, or to support a grant application.

Preparedness Role

There are several opportunities for involvement in emergency preparedness depending on the interest and expertise of the Fellow. As part of the department's Emergency Preparedness Planning, each division has designated emergency preparedness coordinators. The coordinators work with all staff in their respective divisions to provide training and opportunities to volunteer for specialized response efforts. The Fellow could participate in these activities, in activities related to coordinating emergency preparedness with sovereign nations, extending emergency preparedness plans to specialized populations such as pregnant women, infants or children with special health care needs, or other activities.

Assignment Location:	Olympia, WA
Primary Mentor:	Cathy Wasserman, PhD, MPH Epidemiologist Washington Department of Health
Secondary Mentor:	Katie Hutchinson, PhD, MSPH Epidemiologist Washington Department of Health