

Maternal and Child Health

The Alabama Department of Public Health's (Department's) Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Epidemiology Unit, located in the Bureau of Family Health Services (FHS), is applying for an Epidemiology Fellow to engage in MCH needs assessment at the state level. The Fellow's primary mentor will be the Director of the MCH Epidemiology Unit, and the secondary mentor will be the Deputy Director of FHS. These mentors will assure opportunities to develop applied skills and achieve competencies in MCH epidemiology, in a multidisciplinary bureau that administers a variety of MCH programs.

PROGRAM AREA

The mission of FHS is to protect and promote the health and safety of women, infants, children, youth, and their families. Within that context, the MCH Epidemiology Unit has three related goals. The first goal is to provide data-based information on the health of women of childbearing age, children, and youth. Achieving this goal entails collecting, analyzing, and reporting information on the health status and health-related behavior of these populations and on the capacity of the health care system to serve them. The second goal is to meet Title V MCH Services Block Grant reporting requirements, including those for MCH needs assessment. The third goal is to assure that key findings from studies performed are considered by MCH program planners and disseminated to MCH stakeholders.

DAY-TO-DAY ACTIVITIES

The MCH Epidemiology Unit is responsible for spearheading MCH needs assessment, including the federally required 5-year, statewide MCH needs assessment. Additionally, the unit is responsible for preparing and submitting the annually required Title V MCH Services Block Grant reports/applications (Title V MCH reports). The Fellow's day-to-day activities will focus on MCH needs assessment, but may also involve the Title V MCH reports. All these activities entail extensive interdisciplinary collaboration.

In particular, the Fellow will assist with planning, implementing, and reporting the next 5-year, statewide MCH needs assessment. This assessment will be planned in fiscal year 2008 and mainly implemented in fiscal year 2009. The first comprehensive report of the assessment will be submitted to the federal MCH Bureau in July 2010. The needs assessment will be multidimensional, so will provide opportunity for involvement in numerous analytic studies, only some of which are mentioned below. Further, the 5-year assessment entails extensive intra-agency and inter-agency collaboration with persons from a variety of disciplines, especially when forming and convening an MCH Needs Assessment Advisory Group.

POTENTIAL ANALYTIC/INTERDISCIPLINARY PROJECTS

Such projects include the following:

1. Updating maternal and infant profiles for the state and its five perinatal regions. These profiles include many indicators concerning live births, prenatal care, and age- and

birthweight-specific risks of infant death. The profiles are prepared and disseminated in collaboration with the Director of the State Perinatal Program (SPP) and other SPP staff.

2. Collecting and analyzing statewide primary quantitative and qualitative data. These activities will comprise a major component of 5-year MCH needs assessment. Primary data collection will include a mailed survey of providers of primary medical care to maternal and child populations, a mailed survey of non-medical organizations serving maternal and child populations, and community discussion groups.
3. Performing multidimensional, stratified analysis of Alabama live birth cohort/infant death linked files, and deaths of Alabama residents from 1-44 years of age. This project will comprise a critical component of 5-year MCH needs assessment, and many analyses will cover a period of 6 or 7 years. Follow-up analyses will focus on salient issues that arise during the multidimensional analysis. For example, to follow up on a finding from the fiscal year 2004-05 MCH needs assessment, a paper on deaths due to drug-related causes was prepared.
4. In collaboration with Children's Rehabilitation Service, a major division of the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services, analyzing Alabama data from the National Survey of Children with Special Health Care Needs.

POTENTIAL PROGRAM EVALUATION PROJECTS

Such projects include:

1. Evaluating continuing education courses offered by the SPP to health care professionals.
2. Evaluating a project providing care coordination to children with asthma who attend a health center in the southeastern part of the state.

ROLE IN STATE EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

The Department, the Alabama Hospital Association, and the Alabama Nursing Home Association partner to staff a medical transfer center during mass casualty disasters. The Department's primary role during weather-related disasters is to provide medical needs shelters close to the devastated areas. FHS's Director and Deputy Director (the secondary mentor) are part of the Department's emergency preparedness planning group. Further, some employees (including the primary and secondary mentors) are members of disaster response teams. Therefore, the Fellow will have ample opportunity for involvement in planning for and responding to emergencies.

Assignment Location: Montgomery, Alabama

Primary Mentor: Anita J. Cowden, DrPH
Director, Maternal and Child Health Epidemiology
Unit, Bureau of Family Health Services, Alabama
Department of Public Health

Alabama_Cowden

Advanced Degrees:

DrPH, University of Alabama (1989)
MPH, Tulane University (1976)

Secondary Mentor:

Chris R. Haag, MPH
Deputy Director, Bureau of Family Health Services,
Alabama Department of Public Health

Advanced Degrees:

MPH, University of Southern Mississippi (1987)