

Maternal and Child Health

Assignment Description

The Division of Family and Community Health Services (FCHS) is the maternal and child health (MCH) division of the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS). The fellow would be located in the Office of Program Decision Support (OPDS), whose main function is to support the MCH data and evaluation needs of several programs throughout FCHS. These programs include Children with Special Health Care Needs, Family Planning, Breast and Cervical Cancer Screening, Oral Health, Early Periodic Screening Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT), Newborn Screening follow-up, and WIC. The work of OPDS informs policy development and programmatic decision-making. The fellow will have the opportunity to learn how to best present information to engage a broad range of stakeholders, including scientists, policy makers, program staff, and lay people. Areas of OPDS subject matter expertise include child health, adolescent health, women's and perinatal health, and child fatality review. The CSTE fellow will have the opportunity to participate in many workgroups and collaborate with colleagues within the agency as well as with external partners, such as the University of Texas. Texas DSHS also hosts both an EIS officer and a CDC Career Epidemiology Field Officer (CEFO) with which the fellow may collaborate on outbreak and preparedness activities. With a strong link between research and program, there are many opportunities to select a relevant program or surveillance system for evaluation. Once the fellow has been oriented to the FCHS programs, s/he will work with the primary and secondary mentors to identify a surveillance system for evaluation and a major project that will meet the fellow's interests and have the most impact on public health research and practice. The following is a list of potential projects reflecting the databases and program breadth available to the fellow:

- Analysis of Federally-Sponsored Surveillance Surveys. BRFSS, PRAMS, YRBS, National Survey of Children's Health and other national survey data are available for analyses. The fellow will learn how these data are collected, have opportunities to review and add questions, and design and execute studies.
- Analysis of Surveys Developed Within DSHS. Internally developed surveys include the Texas WIC Infant Feeding Practices Survey and the Texas Infant Sleep Survey.
- Analysis of Administrative Data. The fellow will have access to birth and death files, family planning data, data from Texas WIC, hospital discharge data, and other administrative data sets. FCHS is working closely with the Department of Family Protective Services on unique data linkage projects.
- DSHS -funded Studies. FCHS funds studies conducted by university partners on topics that include obesity and adolescent pregnancy prevention. The fellow may work with these partners in the development and execution of analyses. The 4th wave of the School Physical Activity and Nutrition (SPAN) study, which collects information for 4th, 8th and 11th graders, as well as information from the parents of the 4th graders, will be available for analysis.

In addition to working on projects selected to complete the core competencies, the fellow will be integrated into the research staff in order to prepare for post-fellowship employment at a state health department. Duties include providing research consultation and technical assistance to FCHS program areas on epidemiological methods, research/surveillance design and program evaluation/assessment of public health practices. Research staff regularly consults with each other to define and solve problems in a very collaborative environment. Finally, the fellow will also prepare reports, articles, and papers based on findings for a variety of audiences, including presentation at a state and national level and/or publication in peer-reviewed journals. These state and national meetings/conferences offer opportunities to network with other epidemiologists and public health professionals throughout Texas

and the nation. On a day-to-day basis, the fellow's activities will be determined by the individual's interests in combination with the needs of FCHS. For example, the current fellow works on development of surveys, responds to short-turnaround data analysis requests, as well as works on longer term research projects. The fellow will work collaboratively with researchers and program staff in OPDS and have opportunities to attend internal and external meetings and relevant trainings and presentations. Mentors will also work with colleagues in the Prevention and Preparedness section to identify appropriate opportunities for the fellow to meet their requirements for outbreak investigation and emergency preparedness experience.

Day-to-Day Activities

On a day-to-day basis, the fellow's activities will be determined by the individual's interests in combination with the needs of FCHS. For example, the current fellow works on development of surveys, responds to short-turnaround data analysis requests, as well as works on longer term research projects. The fellow will work collaboratively with researchers and program staff in OPDS and have opportunities to attend internal and external meetings and relevant trainings and presentations.

Potential Projects

With a strong link between research and program, there are many opportunities to select a relevant program or surveillance system for evaluation. Once the fellow has been oriented to the FCHS programs, s/he will work with the primary and secondary mentors to identify a surveillance system for evaluation that will meet the fellow's interests and have the most impact on public health research and practice. The following is a list of potential projects reflecting the databases and program breadth available to the fellow:

- o Analysis of Federally-Sponsored Surveillance Surveys. BRFSS, PRAMS, YRBS, National Survey of Children's Health and other national survey data are available for analyses. The fellow will learn how these data are collected, have opportunities to review and add questions, and design and execute studies.
- o Analysis of surveys developed within DSHS such as the Texas WIC Infant Feeding Practices Survey and the Texas Infant Sleep Survey.
- o Analysis of Administrative Data. The fellow will have access to birth and death files, family planning data, data from Texas WIC, hospital discharge data, and other administrative data sets. FCHS is working closely with the Department of Family Protective Services on unique data linkage projects.
- o DSHS -funded Studies. FCHS funds studies conducted by university partners on topics that include obesity and adolescent pregnancy prevention. The fellow may work with these partners in the development and execution of analyses. The 4th wave of the School Physical Activity and Nutrition (SPAN) study, which collects information for 4th, 8th and 11th graders, as well as information from the parents of the 4th graders, will be available for analysis.

Preparedness Role

The primary and secondary mentors will make an effort to create opportunities for the fellow to participate in emergency preparedness and/or response activities, including basic ICS certification in the National Incident Command System (NIMS) 100, 300, and 700 series. In addition, the CDC Career Epidemiology Field Officer (CEFO), who is based in the Strategic Preparedness Branch, will help to identify field opportunities in emergency preparedness/response. The current fellow participates as a member of the Community Assessment for Public Health Emergency Response (CASPER) team at DSHS, which is a strike team that develops and implements community-based household surveys as part of needs assessments for planning and/or responding to an emergency/disaster situation.

Assignment Location:

Austin, TX

Primary Mentor:

Gita Mirchandani, PhD, MPH
MCH/State Oral Health Epidemiologist
Texas Department of State Health Services

Secondary Mentor:

Janie Clark, MSPH
Director
Texas Department of State Health Services