

Environmental Health

Assignment Description

The CSTE Fellow will be assigned to the Environmental and Injury Epidemiology and Toxicology Unit within the Environmental Epidemiology and Disease Registries Section. The Section and Unit have numerous programs all of which would be available to the Fellow to explore. There will be an initial orientation to the department and the programs within the Section during which time the Fellow will spend a minimum of ½ day with the managers and professional staff from each program to discuss available databases, current program projects, future projects, and current needs. After digesting this information, the Fellow will meet with the mentors to discuss interests and potential projects.

Day-to- Day Activities

The Fellow will meet with the Mentor(s) for each week if not daily to discuss issues, projects, and needs. Initially, these meetings will be more frequent and may take more time. Once a project is chosen the Fellow will work with the appropriate program(s) to obtain the data and perform the tasks necessary to complete the project. Day to day activities during this time will vary depending on where the Fellow is with respect to the project but will include tasks related to literature reviews, data retrieval, analyzing data, examining trends, writing documents, and program evaluation. The Fellow also will be encouraged to attend program and department meetings as appropriate and on occasion the Fellow may participate in field activities either in the form of data collection, actual investigations, or meetings with the public.

Potential Projects

The Fellow will have access to data from numerous surveillance systems for the selected project; these include jury data, child lead data, birth defects data, cancer data, fluoridation data, and poison center data; among others. Potential projects could include, but of course would not be limited to, an evaluation of the child blood lead surveillance system, examining the relationship between childhood osteosarcoma and water fluoridation, studying the epidemiology of falls among the elderly, studying the epidemiology of poisonings using poison control data, examining potential health risks associated with environmental exposures, or an actual epidemiologic and toxicologic investigation of exposure to hazardous substances. Preferably, the chosen project will have an environmental or occupational component. If desired, the Fellow also could help transition the child lead program to the healthy homes initiative or work on other registry projects to update the registries to more current systems that meet the new Health Information Technology (HIT) standards.

Preparedness Role

All DSHS employees are required to participate in preparedness activities in some form. The extent of this participation ranges from continuity of operations to full field deployment. The degree to which the Fellow can participate will of course depend on the Fellow's particular skills. As an epidemiologist the Fellow likely could participate in our Community Assistance for Public Health Response (CASPER) activities.

Assignment Location:	Austin, TX
Primary Mentor:	John Villanacci, PhD Unit Director Texas Department of State Health Services
Secondary Mentor:	Lucina Suarez, PhD Section Director Texas Department of State Health Services