

Maternal and Child Health/Chronic Disease

Description:

In order to constantly improve the public health system in Nevada, the NSHD has undergone and will continue to undergo major infrastructure changes. The infrastructure changes serve to streamline public health services as well as align with the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) standards. One of the major infrastructure changes occurring at the NSHD is the growth of the Office of Epidemiology. Previously, NSHD staff that performed epidemiological investigation, surveillance, and analysis were located disparately throughout the NSHD and functioned programmatically with a single-disease focus. This structure limited the cross-collaboration of epidemiology staff and stunted the ability to grow epidemiological capacity in the state. The goal of the NSHD Office of Epidemiology in the coming years is to continue to enhance Nevada's epidemiological capacity by assessing gaps, improving existing systems, developing and implementing prevention and control practices and procedures, increasing processing capabilities, reducing reporting time, and efficiently maintaining accurate surveillance of infectious and chronic diseases. One of the major gaps identified by the Office of Epidemiology is the lack of epidemiological capacity for maternal and child health (MCH) and chronic disease. Therefore, the NSHD is requesting that this Fellow provide epidemiological support for chronic disease and MCH. As Nevada is a smaller state, the NSHD believes that the Fellow would be able to support both programs while placed here.

Day-to-Day Activities:

On a day-to-day basis, the Fellow will work with their mentors and other staff to discuss project status, identify emerging projects and needed activities, and provide project guidance and feedback. They will also work closely with the MCH and Chronic Disease Programs to provide epidemiological and data analysis support as needed based on their deadlines. The Fellow would attend regular trainings and meetings held by various NSHD and external programs. They will be able to participate in internal trainings including the monthly SAS training sessions provided by the State Biostatistician, conference calls for the Statewide Epidemiology Group, and other meetings held by epidemiological and programmatic staff. The NSHD works closely with the schools of public health at the University of Nevada, Reno and University of Nevada, Las Vegas to offer opportunities for training and career development. Further, the NSHD Office of Epidemiology staff regularly attends national and local conferences and trainings to stay abreast of new developments in the field of public health and epidemiology. The Fellow would be given the same opportunities to attend conferences and trainings as funding is available. The Fellow would also attend statewide coalition meetings for Chronic Disease, Epidemiology, and MCH.

Potential Projects:

The project priorities for the Fellow are:

- Provide epidemiological analysis of the MCH and chronic disease data to include in the statewide Healthy People 2010/2020 report.

- Work with other NSHD staff to compile a series of reports for each county in Nevada, particularly for the rural counties where NSHD serves as the local health authority. These reports will assess the burden of chronic disease, identifying trends, risk factors, health disparities and key issues for each county. They will include interpretation of the results of the analyses, best practices for addressing these issues, and policy recommendations for improving health for all Nevadans.
- Work with the NSHD Chronic Disease Program, the Nevada Chronic Disease Alliance, and other statewide partners to develop a comprehensive statewide Chronic Disease Plan based on epidemiological data.
- Work with the Maternal and Child Health Program and statewide stakeholders to develop a comprehensive statewide MCH Plan based on epidemiological data.

Emergency Preparedness Role:

The Primary Mentor for this Fellow, Dr. Ritch, is currently the Chief of the Bureau of Health Statistics, Planning, and Emergency Response at the Nevada State Health Division (NSHD). Though the specific projects for the Fellow in MCH and chronic disease may not include emergency preparedness, the Fellow will be able to work with their mentors to broaden their knowledge in preparedness planning and response.

Assignment Location: Carson City, NV

Primary Mentor: Luana Ritch, PhD
Bureau Chief, Health Statistics, Planning, and Emergency Response
Nevada State Health Division

Secondary Mentor: Ihsan Azzam, MPH, MD, PhD
State Epidemiologist
Nevada State Health Division