

Infectious Disease

The Florida Bureau of Epidemiology (BoE) provides epidemiologic guidance, consultation, technical and field assistance, and training to county health departments, who conduct surveillance for notifiable diseases and investigate outbreaks of infectious and other acute diseases. We manage the state's reportable disease surveillance information system (Merlin) and our secure, threaded, moderated web-based system for sharing urgent epidemiologic information (EpiCom). We lead the development of policy for disease prevention and control. We conduct special studies to better understand causes and prevention of disease, and are very active in the FL-DOH's public health preparedness planning and response efforts.

The CSTE fellow will serve, among other things, as our 4th Regional Epidemiologist, based in our Tallahassee office, and will be assigned a set of about 20 counties (from Pensacola to Tallahassee, with a total population of about 1.3 million) that they will work closely with on disease surveillance, investigation, and preparedness issues. The Fellow will: participate in BoE-wide activities and meetings; lead monthly conference calls with county epidemiologists; work with counties (from the office and in the field) on investigating outbreaks of infectious disease and instituting prevention and control measures; document outbreaks in this area using the National Outbreak Reporting System (NORS); actively use EpiCom as a means of communicating with Florida epidemiologists; conduct special studies; and prepare reports and communications.

The Fellow will also investigate outbreaks of public health significance with our environmental health and veterinary public health epidemiology colleagues, and learn and apply principles of public health informatics in collecting, managing, analyzing, and transmitting data.

The Fellow will have access to a wide variety of Florida data sources to explore the burden of infectious disease, laboratory and diagnostic implications, the risk factors for disease, and efficacy of prevention and control measures. One proposed project would be to analyze the Florida BRFSS (with a triennial county-level survey sample size of about 35,000) for variables related to infectious disease, such as non-receipt of influenza, pneumococcal or hepatitis B vaccine, health-care-worker status, HIV risk, recent GI illness and culture for same, and antibiotic resistance awareness. These data have not been thoroughly explored at a state or county level, and could help in discovering and understanding geographical patterns in disease incidence. The relationship within the BRFSS data of infectious disease risk factors to insurance coverage and to health-related quality of life also could usefully be explored.

Other possible projects include a case-control study of sporadic salmonellosis and/or cryptosporidiosis infections, or analysis of newly-collected data related to the incidence of nocardiosis and risk factors for antibiotic resistance in *Nocardia* isolates.

The Fellow will conduct a surveillance evaluation project on a brand-new statewide system for Outbreak Surveillance, which will capture key data elements on all significant outbreaks investigated by local and state epidemiology staff. This project will rely on both the CDC Surveillance Evaluation Guidelines and the CDC Framework for Evaluation of Surveillance Systems for Outbreak Detection.

The Fellow will have the opportunity to participate in public health and medical (ESF-8) preparedness and response activities. The Fellow's primary supervisor is the BoE coordinator for regional multi-county Epidemiology Strike Teams. The Fellow can assist in the development and delivery of discipline-specific training for these teams, who need to be able to execute high-quality epidemiologic work within an Incident Command Structure environment. The Fellow will have the opportunity to participate in training programs and field exercises offered to Epidemiology Strike Team Members

The Fellow will be activated and deployed for emergency responses (e.g. to hurricanes) along with other central office epidemiology staff members, and have the opportunity to work on surveillance and disease control activities after natural disasters, to assist with population-based post-hurricane surveys, and to investigate acute health problems arising in a natural disaster context. Florida hurricane season extends from June 1 through Nov 30 and there is no shortage of field epidemiology experience that can be gained in Florida in the field of preparedness and response.

Assignment Location:	Tallahassee, Florida
Primary Mentor:	Lauren Ball, DO, MPH Medical Epidemiologist/Supervisor Investigations Unit Acute Disease Section, Bureau of Epidemiology , Division of Disease Control, Florida Department of Health
Advanced Degrees:	DO, Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine (1995) MPH, Temple University (1993)
Secondary Mentor:	Janet Hamilton, MPH Communicable Disease Surveillance and Reporting Unit Administrator Florida Department of Health, Bureau of Epidemiology
Advanced Degree:	MPH, University of Michigan (2003)