

Maternal and Child Health

The Division of Family Health consists of 4 Bureaus as well as the Office of Surveillance, Evaluation and Epidemiology (SEE), and the Office of the Public Health Dental Program, and includes maternal and child health, women's health, school health, family planning, dental health, abstinence, WIC food supplemental program, child care food program, and chronic disease prevention/health promotion.

The purpose of the Office of Surveillance, Evaluation and Epidemiology (SEE) is to strengthen the Department's ability to effectively use scientific evidence in its planning and decision-making related to MCH policies and programs. Created in 2006 with the hiring of a State MCH Epidemiologist, the Office focuses on surveillance, evaluation and epidemiology including training the public health workforce. Surveillance activities include investigating increasing rates of maternal and infant mortality/morbidity, prematurity and Cesarean delivery, maternal and child obesity, and racial disparity. Policy and program evaluation activities include evaluating Healthy Start pregnancy and infant health services, family planning and preconception health services.

The CSTE fellow will be actively engaged in planned projects and activities with the SEE Team and other FDOH and university partners on a daily basis. With input, SEE continuously develops a list of potential MCH epidemiology and surveillance projects of policy/program relevance for staff, fellows and students to work on. The fellow can consider these proposals and new ones. The fellow will develop a work plan designed to meet the fellowship requirements, fellow's interests and program needs in consultation with the CSTE mentors and the Division Director. The intent is to provide a well-rounded solid MCH epidemiologist experience and a successful track record of producing future MCH epidemiologist leaders.

Potential Analytic Projects:

Study Florida's health disparities in pregnancy-related morbidity: Using a new birth certificate file linked to hospital discharges, explore racial and other health disparities in maternal morbidities especially those conditions that contribute to pregnancy-related mortality, near misses, and other preventable conditions. Florida's nationally recognized Pregnancy Associate Mortality Review Team, a multi-disciplinary academic and practice team would like to use this information to better inform obstetrical practitioners and improve maternal health.

Study the impact of Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART) and birth defects: CDC and FDOH are jointly linking CDC's ART Surveillance data with Florida's vital records and statewide birth defects surveillance data to create one of the largest ART datasets linked to health outcomes. This also provides new opportunities for the fellow to study the impact of ART on select birth defect conditions.

Potential Evaluation Projects:

Study the impact of statewide pregnancy support services on maternal and infant health outcomes: Florida screens over 70% of pregnant women in the state to provide pregnancy and infant health services through a statewide program called Healthy Start. New file linkages of program data to vital records, WIC, Medicaid, and PRAMS provide new opportunities to study the program's impact not only on the distal outcomes of infant mortality and prematurity, but on earlier maternal and infant health behaviors and experiences from smoking cessation, to contraceptive use and safe sleep practices.

Potential Surveillance Projects:

Implement a new preconception health indicator surveillance system: Florida is leading a 7-state/CDC effort to develop of core State preconception health indicators to assess and monitor preconception health. By moving from concept to measurement, efforts can be better addressed by a new Florida Preconception Health Council. The fellow will potentially lead the assessment, implementation and utilization of these new surveillance indicators in Florida.

Develop a classification system for Sudden Unexpected Infant Deaths (SUID): FDOH has shown the wide variation in cause of death recording for SUID Deaths by Medical Examiners in the 24 offices across the state. The fellow will have the opportunity to investigate reporting practice of the current surveillance in an effort to better record and monitor SUID deaths in Florida. This could include extensive examination of cause of death recording and potentially include reviewing medical examiner investigations.

Because of multiple hurricanes, pan flu concerns, and other potential hazards, the FDOH persistently focuses on preparedness. The fellow will be able to receive training, to volunteer with hurricane preparation and response, to participate in preparedness planning, and more. Florida experiences several outbreaks each month, providing the fellow with a variety of opportunities for participating outbreaks, based on their interest over the two year fellowship.

Assignment Location: Tallahassee, Florida

Primary Mentor: William Sappenfield, MD, MPH

State MCH Epidemiologist and Director of the Office of Surveillance, Evaluation and Epidemiology

Advanced Degrees: MD, Louisiana State University (1980)

MPH, Harvard School of Public Health (1984)

Secondary Mentor: Sharon Watkins, PhD

Advanced Degrees: PhD, The Ohio State University (1995)

MA, State University of New York (1982)