

Environmental Health

Assignment Description

The Environmental Public Health Tracking (EPHT) Program of the Pennsylvania Department of Health is one among 23 state and local health departments that are a part of the National EPHT Program of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). These local and state systems are designed to inter-operate with the National Tracking Network. The mission of the PA EPHT Program is to provide information from a statewide network of integrated environmental and health data to drive actions that improve the health of Pennsylvania communities. The network strives to improve accessibility to information for the public and tools needed to support the work of environmental researchers and public health practitioners. This is achieved through a geo-spatially enabled external portal for the public and an internal secure portal for researchers and senior level public health managers. PA EPHT currently partners with the Department of Environmental Protection, Pennsylvania Health Care Cost Containment Council (PHC4), The United States Geological Survey (USGS) and the University of Pittsburgh. The CSTE Fellow is expected to understand the organization of the project in its entirety, at the Regional and National level. Specific tasks will include participation in:

- Preparation of data sets from other data sets received by PA EPHT from data providers.
- Quality Control, Analysis, and conversion of datasets to XML format
- Participation as an observer, in national EPHT content working group conference calls
- Interacting with University of Pittsburgh researchers on the PA EPHT Asthma project
- Identifying and working on a research project relevant to PA EPHT.

Day-to- Day Activities

The fellow will work directly with the PA Environmental Public Health Tracking Section Leader, Dr. Jayanth Devasundaram and with the Environmental Health Division Director, Dr. James Logue. Day to day activities will include, but are not limited to:

- Formulating Analyses and Quality control protocols for PA EPHT Surveillance system data and processes
- Periodic Interaction with one or more National Working Groups - from among: A. Cancer Working Group, B. Standards and Network Development, C. Network Architecture Sub Group, D. Air Quality Group E. Geospatial Working Group, F. Vital Statistics Working Group, G. Birth Defects Working Group, H. Hospitalization data Working Group
- Participation in monthly calls with Project Officer from CDC

Potential Projects

- Formulating Analyses and Quality control protocols for PA EPHT Surveillance system data and processes
- Formulating algorithms in natural language processing of public complaints regarding their environment, to be folded into a "public complaints analysis" piece for automated response to complaints from the public submitted over a web interface.
- Integrating the findings of the USGS and University of Pittsburgh into the PA EPHT interface

Preparedness Role

An emergency preparedness division exists within the Bureau of Epidemiology. The Fellow will be introduced to the members of this unit for possible interaction definition of duties during the stay of the Fellow at the PA DOH.

Assignment Location:

Harrisburg, PA

Primary Mentor:

Jayanth Devasundaram, MBBS, MPH
Epidemiologist
Pennsylvania Department of Health

Secondary Mentor:

James Logue, PhD
Division Director
Pennsylvania Department of Health