

Environmental Health

Description:

The Clark County Department of Public Health offers a broad experience in applied epidemiology with emphasis in Environmental Health and Communicable Diseases. The Fellow will have the opportunity to develop comprehensive skills through participation in program design, implementation and evaluation, investigative fieldwork, statistical analysis and interdisciplinary teamwork.

Day-to-Day Activities:

Day-to-day activities will include collaboration with other local health departments throughout Southwest Washington and the Portland metropolitan area, the Washington Department of Health and other local and state agencies and research institutions involved in the monitoring and control of environmental health hazards and infectious diseases. The Fellow will be a member of the Clark County Health Assessment and Evaluation team, and will have an opportunity to participate in investigation and control of notifiable diseases, including foodborne and waterborne outbreaks. The Fellow will work with the Health Officer (and Deputy Health Officer) and Emergency Preparedness and Response staff in developing the Health Department's capacity to detect and respond to bio-terrorism and other mass disasters. In addition, under the supervision of the Health Officer, the Environmental Health Director and Health Department epidemiologists, the Fellow will participate in the development of geographic information system tools that will enable health department and community partners to assess health issues at the neighborhood level.

Potential Projects:

- Outbreak Investigations – Participate in local outbreak investigations; design questionnaires and other data collection tools, conduct interviews, analyze data; write reports and present results at local and regional meetings.
- Environmental Health – Work with county, regional and state interdisciplinary teams to improve tracking, storing and integrating electronic information about environmental hazards, exposures and health outcomes; assist with site hazard assessments. For example, the previous Fellow generated maps of predicted ground water arsenic concentrations.
- Data Analysis/Investigations – The Fellow will advance the work done by the previous CSTE in developing a County Public Health Geographic Information System application capable of depicting a variety of health indicators at the neighborhood level. Vital statistics data, infectious disease data and environmental health data will be available for analysis. In addition, the Fellow will have an opportunity to participate in a funded multisite (Seattle, Olympia and Vancouver) randomized clinical trial adding a contraceptive dispensing component to a public health home visiting program(the primary mentor is Principal Investigator) .

- Health Data - The Fellow will evaluate local health databases and make recommendations for improvement, provide staff training to enhance quality, collection procedures, comprehensiveness and ease of georeferencing/linking data. In addition, the Fellow will assist with health research using inferential and spatial statistics and prepare reports and graphical presentations for public and professional meetings
- Health Impact Assessments – The Fellow will participate in all activities associated with the RWJ Active Living Research grant (PAWN - Planning for Active Walkable Neighborhoods) in developing a health impact assessment of the draft Clark County Pedestrian Plan, ranking components of the plan regarding their predicted impacts on health, making recommendations to planners and developers on incorporating components of the plan based on their ranking and evaluating the impact of our recommendations on development of the final plan.

Emergency Preparedness Role:

The Fellow will assist with an assessment of health department (and regional) policies, procedures and implementation efforts and participate in local, regional and state emergency response activities, exercises and drills. The primary mentor collaborates with the Portland metro area Health Preparedness Organization Steering Committee and is a member of the Washington Region IV Governing Council (The Council oversees public health preparedness planning efforts in Clark, Skamania, Cowlitz and Wahkiakum Counties in SW Washington) and the Portland Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI). The primary mentor is now the Health Officer for all counties in Region IV. Currently, the entire four-county region, including the four county health departments and the Cowlitz Tribe, have delegated authority to a Type 3 team in responding to the H1N1 pandemic. The primary mentor is integrated into the command staff, and will involve the Fellow in response activities if they are ongoing when the Fellow arrives.

Assignment Location: Vancouver, WA

Primary Mentor: Alan Melnick, MD, MPH
Health Officer
Clark County Public Health

Secondary Mentor: Jonnie Hyde, PhD
Environmental Health Director
Clark County Public Health