

Maternal and Child Health

The Office of Family Health Services (OFHS) within the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) will provide an outstanding opportunity for an applied epidemiology Fellow to achieve and demonstrate competencies in the areas of epidemiologic methods, communication, and public health practice. OFHS includes the following divisions: Child and Adolescent Health, Women and Infants' Health, WIC and Community Nutrition Services, Dental Health, Chronic Disease Prevention and Control, and Injury and Violence Prevention. Two other sections at the office-level, the Business Unit and Policy and Assessment Unit (PAU), have responsibilities across all six divisions.

The Fellow will work with mentors in the PAU, which includes the Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Epidemiologist (primary mentor), Title V coordinator (secondary mentor), PRAMS coordinator, and BRFSS coordinator. One of the major activities of the PAU is to facilitate access to data needed for surveillance and program evaluation efforts. Of particular interest is establishing regular and ongoing linkages among key MCH datasets. The primary mentor is actively engaged in a number of data linkage projects involving data from various divisions (e.g., births/WIC, births/birth defects). Thus, the Fellow will have opportunities within specific program areas, but can also choose to focus on broader issues which cut across division lines.

The Fellow will be assigned to a project of mutual interest and benefit. Below are some examples of activities which are areas of need for OFHS and would fulfill the Fellowship's surveillance and major project requirements:

Surveillance Evaluation Opportunities:

- Evaluate the Virginia Cancer Registry, focusing on female cancers. The evaluation may include activities such as linkage of cancer registry and hospital discharge records to potentially improve case ascertainment, and linkage with the breast and cervical cancer screening project to assess impact of increased screening.
- Evaluate the Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) Surveillance system.
- Evaluate the Newborn Screening Surveillance System component of the Virginia Genetics Program. Activities may include an assessment of the impact of recently added conditions to be screened for in the newborn blood-spot screening program.

Major Project Opportunities:

- Identify a cross-cutting issue in family health. Design and implement analyses to address this issue across all OFHS surveillance systems. Create a report or series of reports to disseminate information from a major data source in selected area(s) of interest (e.g. perinatal outcomes, chronic disease, injury).

- Work with a Virginia Health District to study variations of fetoinfant mortality rates using the Perinatal Periods of Risk assessment (PPOR) model. PPOR requires extensive community partnership in addition to the statistical analyses. The fellow would have the opportunity to participate in the entire process.
- Assist with the creation of a longitudinal maternal and child health surveillance database linking births, hospital discharge, and fetal death data. Family-based surveillance data would allow direct analysis of siblings, repeat occurrences of adverse birth outcomes, interpregnancy intervals, etc. These data will eventually be linked with death, WIC, birth defects and other databases pertaining to maternal and child health.

Other Activities:

- Compare the quality of data from the old birth certificate system to that of the new electronic birth certificate system being implemented in Virginia.
- Assist in the evaluation of a service-providing program within Family Health.
- Assist a division in OFHS with designing / revising a surveillance plan for their office.
- Establish surveillance for a condition related to Family Health (gestational diabetes, perinatal depression, etc).

Regardless of the assignment, the fellow will be invited to participate in a journal club at VCU and OFHS Epidemiology Workgroup meetings, where they will have the opportunity to interact with research staff from each of the 6 divisions. The fellow will be encouraged to publish data related to their work in the form of a poster/paper for submission to a scientific conference and/or a manuscript submission to a peer-reviewed journal. The primary mentor will provide access to resources at the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine, such as the Tompkins-McCaw Library for the Health Sciences.

PART B: DESCRIPTION OF SUPERVISION

Assignment Location: Richmond, VA

Primary Mentor: Derek A. Chapman, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Epidemiology & Community Health
Virginia Commonwealth University

Maternal & Child Health Epidemiologist
Virginia Department of Health (Oct 2004-present)

Advanced Degrees: Ph.D., University of Miami (1999)

M.S., University of Miami (1998)

Secondary Mentor: Janice M. Hicks, Ph.D.

Director, Policy and Assessment (1997-present)

Advanced Degrees: Ph.D., Virginia Commonwealth University (1986)

M.A., Appalachian State University (1976)