

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 under the supervision of the State Maternal & Child Health Epidemiologist (primary mentor), and opportunities will be available both within and across specific program areas. One of the major activities of the PAU is to facilitate access to and use of data for surveillance and program evaluation efforts. Of particular interest is establishing regular and ongoing linkages among key MCH datasets, and developing ongoing surveillance data which cuts across OFHS division lines.

The fellow will be assigned to a project of mutual interest and benefit. Because the OFHS presents opportunities across several program areas (e.g., MCH, chronic disease, injury) we will work with the fellow during the matching and interview process to determine the most appropriate activities. Below are some examples of activities which are current areas of need for OFHS and would fulfill the fellowship's surveillance and major project requirements:

Surveillance Evaluation Opportunities:

- Evaluate the Virginia Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS).
- Evaluate Oral Health Surveillance in Virginia.
- Evaluate the Virginia Cancer Registry. 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 Virginia Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS).

Major Project Opportunities:

- Create a health disparity report which covers program areas involving child and adolescent health, including injury and oral health. Work with program managers in the three divisions of OFHS that cover these areas to establish a schedule for updating key surveillance indicators.
- Work with the BRFSS Coordinator to improve dissemination and utilization of BRFSS data. This will include designing map and tabular data by health district to be placed on our web page,

creating a more user friendly dataset organized by topic with accompanying data dictionary, and promoting the use of BRFSS data at VDH through presentations and workshops.

- Work with a Virginia Health District to study variations of fetal-infant 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.

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.
- 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 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's emerging School of Public Health, such as the Tompkins-McCaw Library for the Health Sciences. Fellows will also have the opportunity to gain teaching experience at the graduate level through participation in the Maternal and Child Health Epidemiology course taught each Fall by Dr. Chapman.

Assignment Location: Richmond, VA

Primary Mentor: Derek A. Chapman, Ph.D.

State Maternal & Child Health Epidemiologist

Virginia Department of Health

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

M.S., University of Miami (1998)

Secondary Mentor: Caroline Stampfel, MPH

Lead MCH Analyst

Advanced Degrees: MPH, Yale University (2005)