Chronic Diseases, Maternal & Child Health

Public Health-Seattle & King County, Assessment, Policy Development & Evaluation Unit
Seattle, Washington

Assignment Description

This fellowship is located in the Assessment, Policy Development & Evaluation Unit (APDE) of PHSKC, an award-winning unit responsible for the core functions of community health assessment and evaluation for the Department. As such, we process and analyze several critical databases at the local, state and national level, including vital records, hospital discharges, surveys such as the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey and the Healthy Youth Survey (local) or Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (national) given in schools, the U.S. Census, American Community Survey and Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS), local surveys (Communities Count), and the Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS), as well as use a statewide set of detailed population estimates. APDE has experience with policy development, policy evaluation, and provide data on trends and disparities.

In addition to performing regular surveillance, assessment and evaluation, other primary topics include equity and social justice, access to care, maternal and child health, violence/injury prevention, evaluation of the Affordable Care Act, and chronic disease with emphasis on tobacco prevention and healthy eating/active living. Recent evaluations include King County’s menu labeling regulation impact on customers and restaurants, trends in youth obesity following large initiatives focusing on systems, policy and environment change addressing healthy eating and active living, and the impact of smoke-free housing implementation. APDE geocodes data to latitude and longitude and process data for use in other statistical programs, and routinely produce sub-county population estimates at a neighborhood, city, zip, and/or census tract level. In addition, APDE creates routine maps of health conditions at a city and neighborhood level, focusing on place-based disparities.

http://www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/health/data/APDE/about.aspx

Day-to-Day Activities

The CSTE Fellow’s day-to-day activities may vary, but will primarily be spent working on one or more of the available projects. In the beginning of the fellowship, there will be a high emphasis on training to develop the necessary expertise to interact with the various datasets and the public and to successfully complete the projects. Both the primary and secondary mentors will be providing routine and regular supervision and contact. A typical day could involve meeting with mentors, meeting with project stakeholders, analyzing and/or disseminating data, attending meetings focused on project outcomes, working towards publishing and presenting data, representing PHSKC and APDE in national, state or local groups, and interacting with epidemiologist (internal or external) or with community partners, hospitals, and the public.

The Fellow will have opportunities to explore initiatives of interest during their tenure at PHSKC, determined after arrival. The day-to-day goals should culminate in enhanced competencies in in public health, including assessment and analysis, evaluation, implementation of informatics to public health science, communication via reports, and cultural competency, resulting in a well-rounded epidemiologist ready to work at a state, local, or federal health agency.
Potential Projects

Surveillance  Evaluation

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) aims to drastically alter the structure of the U.S. health care system and ensure greater equity and efficiency in how health services are delivered. In King County, Washington, there is a high degree of interest in monitoring how the ACA might affect equitable access to care, quality and patient experience, and the costs of health coverage and care. Additionally, there are concerns about whether the health system is prepared for specific provisions in the ACA – for example, the capacity of the current health workforce and provider networks to address the needs of an influx of new patients seeking primary care. Through partnership with the University of Washington (UW), PHSKC has developed a quality assurance/evaluation framework to assess the impact of the ACA legislation in King County. The Fellow will specifically be invited to work with Medicaid claims data and commercial plan network adequacy data to set up baseline estimates for key indicators of health reform impact such as the rate of avoidable Emergency Department visits and the proportion of commercial plan health care providers who are not accepting new patients. The Fellow will be the lead on subprojects of the larger ACA evaluation work, and will collaborate closely with epidemiologists and researchers at PHSKC, UW, and the State.

Surveillance  Data Request Service

Activity

Public Health-Seattle & King County's APDE Unit has a robust data request service. This service responds to at least 350 calls or emails requests each year. Questions can come from other Public Health-Seattle & King County staff, other branches of county or city government, legislators, community organizations, other states, media, and from the public. This provides invaluable experience due to the wide-ranging scope of topics and reasons for needing public health data, the connections that develop with other parts of the health department and county/city departments, analyses of a variety of topics, creating maps, and the need to communicate clearly and succinctly with non-technical public and media. The Fellow will work in conjunction with other APDE epidemiologists. Through this project, the Fellow will gain mastery over vital statistics annual datasets, population-based weighted surveys, cancer registry data, Census and American Community Survey data, and hospitalization data.
Surveillance Activity

King County is home to many of the country’s preeminent hospitals. In addition to providing safe and high quality care, these institutions have a long history of addressing our community’s health through community benefit programs that promote health and healing as a response to identified community needs.

A collaborative of all 12 King County hospitals and health systems and PHSKC joined forces to identify the greatest needs of the communities they serve and then develop plans to address them, leveraging expertise and resources to address the most critical health needs in our county. A shared approach to community benefits can avoid duplication and focus available resources on a community’s most important health needs. The Fellow will support the surveillance and evaluation activities of the collaborative as well as that of PHSKC. The first joint needs assessment will be completed by the end of 2014 and while next steps are not yet fully clear as they are dependent on the findings, they will involve implementing collective activities and evaluating these activities. The Fellow will also assist individual health systems in implementation and assist the collaborative with evaluation. The Fellow will work in conjunction with other APDE epidemiologists and program staff.

Major Project

HYS School District Health Profile Reports

Building on partnerships with school districts to advance health and academic achievement, the School District Health Profiles provide assessment data for school districts to understand prevalence of health behavior among students and deliver information for school health and wellness improvement planning processes. The reports summarize key adolescent health behaviors (e.g. nutrition, physical activity, and tobacco use) by race/ethnicity, gender, grade and maternal education (proxy for socioeconomic status) within the school district in addition to district-level comparisons with the county and state. Reports are available online for seven of King County’s 19 school districts. The Fellow will have an opportunity to gain experience in analysis of survey weighted data, cultivate relationships with school wellness program staff, writing, data visualization, and communication of data to non-technical audiences. This work would be carried out under the guidance of the secondary mentor with the expected products being updated reports for King County’s 19 school districts.

Additional Project

Electronic Health Record Demonstration Project: Validation of chronic disease surveillance with EHR

In King County, hospitals and health systems are in the process of converting to electronic health records (EHR). The purpose of this project will be to track EHR use in King County, build relationships to develop the correct pipelines to receive EHR, and participate in discussions about EHR use for public health assessment. PHSKC also maintains public health clinics that provide primary care to low-income, underserved populations. These clinics recently began using EHR. Using clinic data, the Fellow can plan, develop, and implement an informatics project that demonstrates feasibility of obtaining EHR data. Once the data are available, the chronic disease estimates from EHR clinic records will be analyzed and compared to estimates obtained from vital statistics and surveys. As EHR use becomes more prevalent in King County, additional comparisons for the general population may become possible. The Fellow would be the lead on this project and will collaborate with King County IT, epidemiologists - both locally and in state and local jurisdictions for lessons learned – and with WADOH.
**Preparedness Role**

The Fellow will liaise with the PHSKC Preparedness department, providing support and response to emerging situations. Preparedness has developed a number of novel, award winning tools, such as a Business Engagement Toolkit, and has received several NACCHO Model Practice awards.

**Additional Activities**

The Fellow will also have the opportunity to work with other units within PHSKC. Depending upon the particular interests of the Fellow, other projects may be developed over the course of the fellowship.

**Mentors**

**Primary**
Eva Wong, PhD, MS
Epidemiologist

**Secondary**
Myduc Ta, PhD, MPH
Epidemiologist