

Eryn Leahy
Summer 2020
PH 498

Interim Report 2 (Weeks 5-10)

Specific activities of involvement:

In the second five weeks of my preceptorship experience, I have continued my previous work and added some new duties. I have continued to create and post graphics to the Facebook page, continued to assist with Wisconsin National Guard (WING) testing and tracking that data, and finished delivering meals to patients in isolation at the local facility. I also was able to continue attending coalition meetings, where we discussed different projects with Electronic Benefit Transfer at Farmer's Markets (including meeting with Representative Katrina Shankland to discuss potential funding), AODA coalition work, and Suicide Prevention and Mental Health efforts in Portage County. I also attended meetings for Incident Command System, Emergency Operation Center, and Public Information Officer (PIO), and media briefings for Portage County. During these meetings, we discussed the situation of COVID-19 on a county and state level and discussed Public Health response to the situation. In addition to these meetings, I also attended many Zoom calls with WI DHS about COVID-19 response and attended multiple webinars through APHA, such as "A Path to Reproductive Justice," and "How COVID-19 and Racism Intersect with Intimate Partner Violence."

In week five, I began contact tracing between my other job duties. I completed training with a nurse in contact tracing and then began calling people to collect patient information to help Public Health get a head start on potential positive cases. During my first call, I got hit on! The man I called to collect information from, who ended up testing positive, told me that I

sounded cute and that he would like my phone number. After that experience, I did my best to pick women to call and ensured that I would not be the one to do the follow-up interviews with that man. I also began updating the county dashboard with COVID-19 case counts and began posting daily updates to the Facebook page again.

Changes that have occurred:

At the end of week seven, I was offered a full-time, LTE job as a Community Health Planner. In this role I am able to continue my current duties while also adding on some extra work with the PIO group, including creating press releases when needed, having a more active role with Facebook, and more duties with Public Health response to COVID-19. After being offered the job position, I began training in these new duties, completed orientation, filled out all the necessary paperwork, and officially started the job on Tuesday, July 21. The funding lasts through the end of December 2020 and if I want to continue here, there is a job available starting January 2021 as a Health Education Specialist. I currently have a dual role of “Public Health Intern” and “LTE Community Health Planner,” where I am continuing to track my hours to meet the preceptorship requirements while also recording my hours for Portage County. One change with this is that I am working 2.5 hours more per week to make up for my lunch break, which I don’t get paid for, so I may complete my hours for preceptorship a little earlier than expected.

During week nine, we lost the isolation facility where we were housing and feeding patients affected by COVID-19 after the media got ahold of the name of the facility, which was until then confidential information. Because of the stigma associated with housing people infected, they were uncomfortable continuing to host patients, which led to me no longer delivering meals.

Areas of Responsibility:

In the last report, I briefly touched on utilizing NCHEC Responsibility Area VI: Serve as a Health Education/Promotion Resource Person. I have continued to utilize this, but also have identified multiple other competencies. I have utilized competencies 4.4: Collect and manage data and 4.5: Analyze data following the WING Testing Events, where I organized and analyzed the patient information and test results for the county. The competencies I have utilized most are 6.1: Obtain and disseminate health-related information and 7.1: Identify, develop, and deliver messages using a variety of communication strategies, methods, and techniques. I exercise these each workday through sharing COVID-19 case counts and other important data to the Facebook page. Throughout this entire experience, I have applied competency 7.4: Promote the health education profession. In Facebook posts and in my daily life, I continue to share the importance of understanding health and what good health can do for you.

I plan on utilizing some competencies in the future with upcoming projects. The Portage County Health Officer, Gary Garske, has mentioned possible revision of the mission, values, and strategic planning goals of Portage County before the end of the year. Being involved in that project would utilize competencies 2.2: Develop goals and objectives and 2.4: Develop a plan for delivery of Health Education/promotion. In addition to that I have spoke with Jenna Flynn, a member of the Central Wisconsin Tobacco Free Coalition, who spoke of future advocacy work with Wisconsin government officials, which would utilize competency 7.2: Engage in advocacy for health and health education/promotion. I had mentioned my previous experience of meeting with Representatives and Legislators to discuss Tobacco 21 on the state level, so I am hoping we are able to have an opportunity to continue this work and advocate for other health-related legislation if it is safe to do so.

Positive aspects:

I am really enjoying the variety of things I am learning through this experience. Although it is stressful to be learning the professional world of Public Health while being in a pandemic, I know this time is very beneficial. I am gaining skills as a Public Health professional, a problem-solver, and receiving praise for continuing to stay positive and passionate throughout this experience. I am very grateful for the opportunity to continue my work and learn even more! I am also grateful that I have been able to continue to work on site, instead of remotely, as I feel that I am able to get a better understanding of a career at a health department.

Problems or issues:

I have not experienced any problems in weeks 5-10.

Recommendations:

I cannot think of any specific preliminary recommendations for the improvement of the agency. If I have ideas for changing things along the way, I do feel comfortable sharing them with my supervisors and they take them into consideration.

Conclusion:

All in all, I am still enjoying my time at Portage County Health and Human Services-Division of Public Health. I am extremely grateful and proud of myself for being offered a full-time job only halfway through my experience. I am also excited to continue the work I have been doing and to learn more along the way.