

Darby DeGross

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## Interim Report 1

### **Overview of the Agency**

I am in my 7<sup>th</sup> week here at the La Crosse County Health Department. I mostly work under the Alliance to HEAL with Al Bliss, but I also assist Safe Routes to School with Becky Lakowske, Rachel King, and Ginny Loehr. So far, I have gotten an overview of the whole La Crosse County Health Department as well as a more specific overview of the Health Education department within it. During my intern orientation meeting, I received an idea of how the Health Department operates (accreditation, administration fiscal/finance, etc.) and all the departments included. These include the Health Education department, Environmental Health (including the lab), Public Health Nursing, and WIC/Nutrition. I also learned more in depth about the Health Education department and the grants/projects that are currently being run through there. Some of these include the Alliance to HEAL, Safe Routes to School, Farm to School, and the Tobacco Prevention and Control Program.

### **Specific activities of Involvement**

My first big project that is still ongoing is updating the Community Resource Guide and drop box location posters. The guide is created for the La Crosse community and contains resources for treatment (including those who offer Medicated Assisted Treatment), mental health/substance use counseling, support services, residential/transitional housing and other agencies and information available. It also has the medication drop box locations as well as the sharps disposal container locations. My first few weeks were spent contacting agencies for their information and cross-referencing other resource guides to compile all the resources available in

La Crosse. We are still putting the final touches on the guide and it will hopefully be completed in the next few weeks. Both the medication drop box and sharps disposal location posters were out of date, so I spend some time adding the new locations and redoing the flyers to be read easily by community members.

With the Alliance to HEAL (A2H) I get to attend and listen in on many meetings regarding the opioid crisis and the work each workgroup is doing. Some workgroups I have participated in are WG1) Diversion of Opioids, WG6) Sober Living, WG9) Narcan and Needles, and the combined work group meetings focused on education and community outreach. Through these meetings I have met several key players in the La Crosse area working to decrease overdoses and opioid addictions. I also get to be apart of the Overdose Fatality Review (OFR) team. This is a separate grant from A2H but is closely related to the work in it. The OFR team gathers data on a person's life who died of an overdose in La Crosse. We look for themes apparent in many of the cases and make recommendations for policy and program changes to hopefully prevent more addictions and overdoses.

Most recently I was able to attend Mayo Clinic Health System's Love Your Community Fair. Al and I had a table and a display set up and we talked with employees and members of the community about A2H and the work we're doing. This was a very cool experience for me as I got to make the display for the event and participate. Our board had all the workgroups and their recent successes as well as updated statistics on drug use and overdoses in La Crosse. We also included our sharps and medication drop box locations, Community Resource Guide, and our Alternative Pain Management Guide on the board and as handouts for those who wanted them. We spent our time promoting our Drug Take Back Day coming up in April at the event too, which is April 25<sup>th</sup> at the Health and Human Services Building.

Due to another intern dropping out, I get to help with the Safe Routes to School grant this semester as well. This program works with area elementary schools to make walking or biking to and from school safer and more enjoyable for youth and caregivers. So far, I have only helped with finding pedestrian and bike safety worksheets and helped with data entry for their school tallies and parent surveys. I will start to assist the program more as the weather improves and their school activities and events begin.

The last few specific activities I have been a part of is attending the FACT breakfast for the city Council, plan an advocacy meeting, and assist in writing a Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) grant. The FACT Breakfast was put on by Logan High School Students to educate La Crosse City Council members on the dangers of vaping and to ask them to add it to the city's Smoke Free Air law. The advocacy meeting is related to this project, as Kylie Hanrahan, Kelsey Shuda and I are planning on meeting with City Councilman Justice Weaver about vaping dangers and the Smoke Free Air law as well. The most recent project I've worked on is the Overdose Data to Action Grant from the Wisconsin DHS. This has been a very valuable experience for me because I have seen and participated in the entire process, from planning, writing, to submitting the grant next week. I will also get to see if the grant will be funded as the health department will know by May. I really enjoyed writing this grant and worked with many people from La Crosse County including Justice Support Services and the School District of La Crosse.

### **Changes that have Occurred**

There have not been many changes in my activities/projects since the proposal of involvement. One change is that I wasn't originally working with Safe Routes to School, but now I am, and I am very excited to be able to work with two very different populations during my time at the

health department. One other change I will note is that I am sitting for the CHES exam in April. After talking to a few health educators here I decided last minute that I wanted to take this exam now rather than in October. My supervisors are aware that I am taking the exam in April as well.

### **Positive Aspects**

The best positive aspect of my experience here at the La Crosse County Health department is the people I work with. Everybody in health education department has been extremely welcoming and always make me feel included. Even the people outside of the health education department have been friendly and say hi to me in the hallway or break room. My mentor, Al Bliss, has been awesome as well. I have learned so much from him and admire how much work he puts in to keep the A2H running smoothly. I also have enjoyed the broad variety of activities I've got to be a part of. Other health educators offer to let me new experiences and I am grateful that this health department has the capacity for so many cool and exciting programs.

### **Problems or issues**

I have not experienced any specific problems since starting my preceptorship here.

### **Conclusion**

I would say that I am very content here at the La Crosse Health Department. Originally, I had not planned on looking for jobs at health departments when I graduate, but this experience has led me to keep an open mind to them. There is such a broad scope of programs that a health educator can work on and be a part of several at one time. That kind of variety is what I enjoy, and I think I'd really love looking for a job somewhere similar to this health department.