Fall 2020 DrPH Practicum Showcase

Kelsey Barton, MPH

**Purpose:** The purpose of this practicum was to gain experience working in a state level government organization. Throughout her practicum Kelsey worked on a variety of PFAS-related projects including, but not limited to: execution of a pilot fish sampling campaign; development of a technical support document for fish consumption advisories; and, presentation of Colorado’s PFAS activities at a regional conference hosted by the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry.

**Summary:** Kelsey worked at CDPHE in the Toxicology and Risk Assessment (TARA) unit within the Toxicology and Environmental Epidemiology Office under supervision of State Toxicologist Dr. Kristy Richardson. The TARA unit conducts surveillance and provides consultation to CDPHE’s environmental programs, federal agencies, local public health departments and the general public on the risk of health effects from exposure to environmental chemicals. Kelsey worked primarily on projects related to exposure to per and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), which is a major exposure concern in Colorado.

David LaRocca, MS

**Purpose:** The purpose of this practicum was to understand the COVID-19 response of food assistance organizations in Jefferson County, identify opportunities to strengthen the emergency food system, and report the results back to local stakeholders.

**Summary:** The onset of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic in March 2020 amplified the issue of food security in Jefferson County, Colorado. This practicum experience leveraged a collaboration with the Community First Foundation, Jefferson County Public Health, and Aging Dynamics to understand the county’s food system response to COVID-19. Key informant interviews were conducted with fourteen food assistance organizations in Jefferson County in order to understand their current capacity to procure and distribute food to Jefferson County residents, design and implement community-centered programming related to food assistance, and identify opportunities for increasing coordinated capacity across the Jefferson County emergency food system.

Amber Vaughn, MPH

**Purpose:** The purpose of this practicum was to understand practical applications of homebuyer awareness radon policy in the passage, efficacy, and expansion and provide strategies/tips for states who would like to adopt this policy in the future.
**Summary of Practicum Experience:** Amber worked with the American Association of Radon Scientists and Technologists (AARST) remotely to develop, conduct, and submit a paper for publication of a qualitative study regarding the homebuyer awareness radon policy. Homebuyer awareness radon policy differs greatly by state and so does the efficacy of the policy in its goal to increase awareness and increase radon testing during real estate transactions. Within her practicum experience, she presented her findings at the 34th Annual International Radon Symposium and helped with the First Annual Rocky Mountain AARST Chapter Golf Fundraiser for Radon Awareness in Real Estate.

**Nicole Reed, MPH, CHES**

**Purpose:** The purpose of this practicum was to better understand the health areas of importance to American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) youth, and the mediums in which they would like to receive health information.

**Summary:** In collaboration with We R Native, Nicole helped the Northwest Portland Indian Health Board design, implement, and analyze their Youth Health Tech Survey for the 2020 year. This survey provides valuable insight into AIAN youth, the health topics they consider important, and how they like to receive health information. With the results of this study, both We R Native and the Northwest Portland Indian Health Board tailor specific health information for AIAN youth across America. This practicum provided Nicole the opportunity to learn best practices from individuals who are leading the mHealth effort in AIAN adolescents.

**Carl LoFaro, MSW**

**Purpose:** The purpose of this practicum was to understand veteran community peer support programs and to develop, with assistance from organizations already doing this work, a model illustrating key components and their relationships to each other.

**Summary:** Carl worked as a member of a multidisciplinary research team at the Rocky Mountain MIRECC for Veteran Suicide Prevention as part of the larger community-level rural veteran suicide prevention initiative, *Together With Veterans*. At the behest of community partners, the research team developed and completed a research proposal to better understand veteran community peer support programs. Carl and the team interviewed leaders from a diverse group of already existing programs, analyzed the data to draft a conceptual model of these programs, gathered feedback from research participants and other stakeholders, made revisions, and shared the findings through a white paper for VA suicide prevention leadership, conference poster presentations, and a forthcoming article in a peer-reviewed journal. The project is ongoing, and the team is developing products to disseminate the findings to organizations interested in developing or improving veteran peer support programs.

**Olivia Zarella, MPH**
Purpose: The purpose of this practicum was to provide support to the Colorado public health system during the COVID-19 pandemic, while also providing opportunities for career growth and experience to ColoradoSPH students.

Summary: Olivia created the ColoradoSPH COVID-19 Student Response Initiative (CCSRI) with her practicum preceptor, Dr. Lisa Miller, and recruited over 200 ColoradoSPH students to support local public health agencies and organizations during the pandemic. Olivia began her practicum after a request in early March from Governor Jared Polis’ office to organize medical and public health students to support COVID-19 related healthcare needs in Colorado. Olivia became the ColoradoSPH Student Liaison for the wide-spread CU Anschutz effort to organize ColoradoSPH students and match the volunteers to local healthcare organizations. Through CCSRI, 75 ColoradoSPH students have been hired by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment to support COVID-19 response in the state of Colorado. In addition, many new partnerships between ColoradoSPH and external public health organizations were created.