

## **Guidelines for Preceptors**

### **Section I: Executive Summary of Preceptor**

*Along with the Preceptorship Experience- New Site Form also submit resume/CV for documentation*

#### **Criteria for Site Preceptor**

- MPH or equivalent degree plus three years professional public health or related experience
- OR Bachelor's degree at least five years of professional public health or related experience

#### **Qualities of an Effective Site Preceptor**

The preceptor plays a key role in determining what the student learns and must be approachable, competent in mentoring, and interested in the student's academic career goals. Please note that family members of the student may not serve as the student's preceptor

- The Public Health Practice Coordinator reviews the resume/CV of each potential preceptor to assess qualifications.
- Should someone not meet the above criteria, the Public Health Practice Coordinator can grant an exception based upon their academic and professional background.
- The preceptor must have expertise in the student selected area of interest so s/he can serve as mentor and supervisor.
- The preceptor should review the Preceptorship Experience Manual: Guidelines for Preceptors in its entirety and consult with the Public Health Practice Coordinator for additional details, as needed.

Learning for the student is enhanced when:

1. Preceptor has positive professional identity
2. Desire to support the learning and work of student
3. Has time to work with student
4. Has the experience to guide the student in whatever project is undertaken

#### **Time Requirements**

1. Preceptor meets with student at least three times (within 200 hour time frame) to determine progress and assess support needed.
2. Project and/or student work undertaken in agency should be able to be completed within the allotted 200 hour time frame. Other time configurations can be negotiated between student, preceptorship course advisor, and preceptor. *Student Reminder: Tuition must be paid if the project is carried over to the next semester.*

### **Negotiating the Learning Objectives**

Before Preceptorship begins, the student, preceptorship course advisor, and preceptor should discuss and negotiate the learning objectives, define the roles, responsibilities and specific tasks to be undertaken as part of the practicum. The schedule of work and expected products to be left at the preceptorship site upon completion of the practicum should also be determined. The student is responsible for preparing the preceptorship plan that is signed by the student, preceptorship course advisor, and preceptor.

### **Student Responsibilities**

Students are responsible for:

1. Meeting all the terms of the preceptorship plan within accepted agency standards of quality;
2. Arranging meetings with preceptor, and course advisor as needed and defined;
3. Fulfilling the terms of the preceptorship plan;
4. Identifying any barriers to completion of negotiated task and arranging meeting to resolve any problems.
5. Evaluating the preceptorship experience
6. Submitting all required paperwork

### **Preceptor Responsibilities**

Preceptors are responsible for:

1. Meeting with students on a pre-arranged schedule to determine progress;
2. Overseeing the professional growth and development of student in task accomplishment;
3. Communicating problems in placement to student, course advisor, Public Health Practice Coordinator;
4. Providing the students with needed resources to enable them to accomplish tasks;
5. Evaluating student strengths and weaknesses and providing timely feedback.

## **Section 2: Preceptor Role and Responsibilities**

### **Before Preceptorship**

1. Preceptors are responsible for negotiating a signed Preceptorship Plan with the student before the internship begins.
2. Preceptors are responsible for providing the student with background information on the organization/agency, and orienting students to anticipated placement tasks, the organizational structure and decision-making processes.
3. Preceptors are responsible for facilitating agency resources to accomplish mutual goals.

### **During Placement**

1. Preceptors are responsible for meeting with the student on the pre-arranged schedule to discuss progress throughout placement.
2. Preceptors are responsible for reviewing and approving the tasks and products

developed by the student mid-way through their preceptorship to provide feedback and make adjustments to the student scope of work and tasks. This will be done through the completion of the progress report.

3. Preceptors are responsible for overseeing the professional growth and development of students in task accomplishment.
4. Preceptors are responsible for assessing student accomplishments and professional strengths and weaknesses observed during placement, discussing these areas with the student, and completing an evaluation in a timely manner.
5. Provide opportunities for networking and career advancement.
6. Contact the Office of Student Service Public Health Practice Coordinator, as needed.
7. Assess the student's performance and complete the Evaluation of Student form and submit it to the Public Health Practice Coordinator in a timely fashion at the end of the practice experience.

### **Section 3: Managing the Preceptorship**

Preceptors accept students for many reasons. Some of the reasons include the following: they wish to participate in the professional preparation of those who one day will be colleagues; they wish to provide quality opportunities for application of theory into practice; they wish to involve students in time specific projects that provide an excellent learning opportunity for students while assisting the agency to accomplish specific goals. While graduate-level students can and usually do provide excellent professional work, they are not staff and require periodic assessment of their performance.

1. Before placement begins, or soon thereafter, orient the student to your organization's goal and staff.
2. Consider the student to be a special projects person who will enrich the programs in your organization. Plan to look for the special skill(s) each one possesses and negotiate projects that match his/her abilities and your needs.
3. Create a title for your student, e.g., Staff Associate, Research Assistant. Students generally do not like to be referred to as "students."
4. Require the student to manage his/her time well. Review time-line developed by the first few weeks of placement.
5. Schedule time to confer with the student. Expect the student's presence to add to your workload.
6. Expect the student's capabilities to become clearer over the course of the placement. Build in flexibility to limit or expand responsibilities over time and to allow the student to maximize learning.
7. Provide a supportive environment in which the student can make mistakes and learn from them.
8. Serve as the mentor, role model and coach for your student.

### **Assessment of Student Needs & Negotiating a Preceptorship Plan**

Before you agree to accept a student for a preceptorship, it will be important to make sure that there is a good fit between what the student wants to learn, the student's career goals, and student skill level to perform the activities which form the scope of work for their preceptorship. Take the time to meet with the student. Use the questions below to help the student clarify what they want to learn and what you want them to do during their practicum placement. Taking the time up front to clarify the terms of the practicum and needs of student will prevent problems from developing later in the practicum.

### **Negotiating a Scope of Work for student Preceptorship Plan**

The first step in the learning contract process is to review the student's objectives, education and preparation, and professional work experiences.

During the course of the negotiation it will be useful to have the student clarify objectives. Consider whether his/her objectives for the practicum are appropriate and thoughtfully selected. This may be very specific: more often they are vague and general. Discuss the objectives and clarify them by asking:

1. What do you hope to accomplish during this period?
2. How do you see yourself accomplishing that?
3. Are there particular skills you need/want to practice/develop?
4. What are your short-term and long-term goals?

Another approach is to suggest ways to meet the student's objectives:

1. To achieve this objective, I would have you do (describe activity/responsibility).
2. How does this compare to what you have in mind?

Other topics of discussion:

1. What are your strengths in professional practice?
3. What skills/areas are you interested in developing or improving?
4. What are your career plans after you graduate and how do you plan to function in the public health field?

Keep in mind that personal interactions throughout the negotiation process will help you assess the student's communications skills.

Discuss potential projects and the conditions under which you prefer to have the student work. Include supervision schedule, work hours, stipend (if applicable), travel, access to support staff, etc. The purposes of this discussion are to clarify preceptor and student expectations, capabilities and project demands and to clearly define roles.

### **Guidelines for Providing Feedback to Students during Preceptorship**

The ability to provide feedback to students on their performance, skill development, communication style, etc. during their placement is an integral part of how student learning will be accomplished. Skillful feedback is the foundation for a successful student/mentor relationship. In order to provide feedback which is accurate and detailed, keep notes about the student's activities and performance, documenting specifics that you can use to develop and support an appraisal of his/her progress. It should be noted that it will be beneficial for the site preceptor to record observations on an ongoing basis.

### **Solicit Feedback during Placement**

Being an effective preceptor is a challenge. It requires experience, self-assessment, and practice. Students can provide useful input for you to consider as you refine your skills. Seek and accept the student's feedback on your performance as a preceptor.

Explore his/her answers to questions like these:

- What did you like or dislike about our relationship, the projects, and the way you are being supervised?
- How did you feel about the types of projects you have? Are they challenging? Too easy? Too complicated?
- How clear are your responsibilities? How helpful is the work plan?
- How helpful are instructions for projects and delegated tasks?
- Are they organized? Complete? Clear?
- How comfortable are you with the level of independence you are allowed?
- Do you feel encouraged to practice creative problem-solving?
- What makes you feel that way?
- Is communication with me frequent enough? How useful is it? Is feedback helpful?
- Are your expectations for the practicum being met? If not, what are the reasons?
- What changes can you suggest to benefit you or me?

Reflect on your perceptions and on the student's feedback about the placement experience. Plan specific strategies to refine your style as a preceptor for the next student. Remind students that asking for and giving feedback are skill areas for public health professionals.

### **Section 4: Evaluating the Student and the System**

An ongoing, systematic assessment of student progress and professional development enables the preceptor and the student to adjust the placement experience as necessary. Ideally, evaluation involves an open exchange. This provides feedback that the student can use to

develop or refine skills and information the preceptor can use to modify student projects or supervisory strategies. A formal, written evaluation at the end of the practicum is required and provides faculty with an appraisal of the student's performance, accomplishments, and needs for continued academic experiences and skill development.

The system involves two evaluation strategies:

1. Preceptor's feedback to the school at the completion of placement.
2. Analytical paper on field learning by the student

### **Conduct a Summative Evaluation**

Conduct a formal evaluation at the completion of the placement to assess the student's progress toward his/her objectives and professional growth and development. The preceptor should use the evaluation form included and also consider comparing evaluations. Have the student assess his/her performance independently. Compare it to your performance evaluation. Discuss the similarities and the differences. Explore reasons for ratings and explain the rationale for your own. See the **Appendix 1** for *MPH Core and Post-baccalaureate Certificate Competencies* that should be utilized in your evaluation of the student.

The Preceptor should assess the student's performance using the Evaluation of Student Form once the student has completed half of their preceptorship project. The student's performance is evaluated again using the same form and SUBMITTED to the Public Health Practice Coordinator at [bmwalker@uams.edu](mailto:bmwalker@uams.edu) in a timely fashion at the end of the preceptorship experience.

## **Appendix 1: MPH Core and Post-baccalaureate Certificate Competencies**

### **Biostatistics**

- Describe the roles biostatistics serves in the discipline of public health.
- Describe basic concepts of probability, random variation and commonly used statistical probability distributions.
- Describe preferred methodological alternatives to commonly used statistical methods when assumptions are not met.
- Distinguish among the different measurement scales and the implications for selection of statistical methods to be used based on these distinctions.
- Apply descriptive techniques commonly used to summarize public health data.
- Apply common statistical methods for inference.
- Apply descriptive and inferential methodologies according to the type of study design for answering a particular research question.
- Apply basic informatics techniques with vital statistics and public health records in the description of public health characteristics and in public health research and evaluation.
- Interpret results of statistical analyses found in public health studies.

### **Environmental Health Sciences**

- Describe the direct and indirect human, ecological and safety effects of major environmental agents, including chemical, physical, biological, ergonomic, and safety exposures in outdoor, residential, educational and occupational settings.
- Identify the common genetic, physiologic, psychosocial and demographic factors that affect susceptibility to adverse health outcomes following exposure to environmental agents.
- Describe governmental regulatory programs, non-governmental guidelines and authorities directed toward management of environmental hazards.
- Specify current risk assessment methods for exposures to environmental agents through multiple potential exposure modes
- Describe multiple approaches for controlling and mitigating hazards from environmental agents
- Explain the general mechanisms by which environmental agents elicit a toxic response and the ways in which the human body defends itself against hazardous exposures
- Identify common risk management and risk communication approaches, including their relationship to issues of environmental justice and equity.
- Develop a plan for the identification, quantification or communication of potential adverse human health effects that might result from exposure to an environmental agent.

### **Epidemiology**

- Understand and apply the basic terminology and definitions of epidemiology
- Understand how to calculate basic epidemiologic measures.
- Identify key sources of existing data that can be used for epidemiologic purposes.
- Identify the principles and limitations of public health screening programs (primary, secondary, tertiary).
- Describe public health problems and their determinants in terms of magnitude, person, time, and place.
- Explain the importance of epidemiology for informing scientific, ethical, economic, and political discussion of health issues.
- Comprehend basic ethical and legal principles pertaining to the collection, maintenance, use, and dissemination of epidemiologic data.
- Communicate epidemiologic information to lay and professional audiences.
- Critically assess and draw appropriate inferences from epidemiologic data, including identifying its strengths and limitations.

### **Health Policy and Management**

- Identify the main components and issues of the organization, financing and delivery of health services and public health systems in the US.
- Describe the legal and ethical bases for public health and health services.
- Explain methods of ensuring community health safety and preparedness.
- Discuss the policy process for improving the health status of populations.
- List the principles and components of program planning, development, budgeting, management and evaluation in organizational and community initiatives.
- List principles of strategic planning and marketing to public health and health care.
- Discuss quality and performance improvement concepts to address organizational performance issues.
- Explain "systems thinking" for resolving organizational problems.
- Describe appropriate channels and technologies to communicate health policy and management issues.
- Describe leadership skills for building partnerships.

### **Social and Behavioral Sciences**

Identify basic theories, concepts and models from a range of social and behavioral disciplines that are used in public health research and practice.

Identify the causes of social and behavioral factors that affect health of individuals and populations.

Identify individual, organizational and community concerns, assets, resources and deficits for social and behavioral science interventions.

Identify critical stakeholders for the planning, implementation and evaluation of public health programs, policies and interventions.

Describe steps and procedures for the planning, implementation and evaluation of public health programs, policies and interventions.

### **Social and Behavioral Sciences (continued)**

Describe the role of social and community factors in both the onset and solution of public health problems.

Describe the merits of social and behavioral science interventions and policies.

Apply evidence-based approaches in the development and evaluation of social and behavioral science interventions.

Apply ethical principles to public health program planning, implementation and evaluation.

Specify multiple targets and levels of intervention for social and behavioral science programs and/or policies.

### **Communications**

Demonstrate effective written and oral communication skills appropriately targeted to diverse professional and lay audiences.

Demonstrate the ability to collect, organize and interpret data and to present this information to diverse professional and lay audiences.

Describe legal and ethical issues related to the use of data and technology in public health settings.

### **Diversity and Cultural Competency**

Demonstrate awareness as to how race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status and other diversity in aspects of identity impact individual and public health.

Demonstrate ability to interact effectively and appropriately with diverse groups in academic settings.

### **Leadership**

Describe principles and attributes of effective public health leadership.

Recognize the importance of the ability to work independently and to strategically motivate others to engage in collaborative problem solving, decision making and evaluation.

### **Public Health Biology**

Integrate general biological and molecular concepts into public health.

Discuss how the biological and molecular context of public health impacts public health practice.

Apply biological principles to development and implementation of disease prevention, control and management.

### **Professionalism**

Provide a definition of public health that captures the unique characteristics of the field (e.g. population-focused, community-oriented, prevention-motivated, and rooted in social justice) and how these contribute to professional practice.

Demonstrate high standards of personal and organizational integrity, compassion, honesty and respect for all people.

Demonstrate ethical choices, values, and professional practices in public health decision making.

Explain the value commitment to lifelong learning and professional public health service including continuing education and participation in professional organizations.

### **Program Planning and Assessment**

Demonstrate awareness of the required elements of designing, developing, implementing, and evaluation of a strategic plan to improve community health.

Describe the tasks necessary to assure that program implementation occurs as intended.

Explain how the findings of programmatic evaluation can be utilized.

Demonstrate the ability to prioritize public health concerns and organize resources to address them.

### **Systems Thinking**

Identify the elements of public health systems at all organizational levels.

Describe the effects of political, social, and economic policies and forces on public health systems at the local, state, national and international level.

Discuss the impact of global public health issues and interdependencies on public health related problems and systems.

