

Behavioral Health-SAMHSA,

Philadelphia Department of Public Health (PDPH), Health Commissioner's Office

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Assignment Description

The Fellow will be primarily based in the Opioid Surveillance and Prevention Program in the Health Commissioner's Office. The Opioid team consists of 2 Masters level epidemiologists, 2 physicians, 1 social worker and 1 2nd year CSTE fellow. Surveillance and prevention activities managed by the Opioid Program are fully integrated, which should provide the fellow with a firm understanding of how data is used to shape prevention efforts and policies. In addition, the fellow will have an opportunity to work on projects in specific PDPH Divisions, including the Medical Examiner's Office, the Division of Disease Control, and the AIDS Activities Coordinating Office, and other City Departments, including Police, Fire/EMS, and Behavioral Health. The fellow will have access to additional analytic and evaluation support from the Epidemiology Program.

At DBHIDS, the fellow will work closely with the OAS and CBH teams responsible for quality oversight of addiction treatment services. These groups will introduce the Fellow to the DBHIDS data warehouse, as well as the current clinical protocols and standards of care used to oversee hepatitis screening in addiction treatment settings. Through regular meetings, DBHIDS staff will also familiarize the Fellow with local physical health managed care organizations and the provider treatment community.

Day-to-Day Activities

Initially, the fellow will complete orientations with PDPH and DBHIDS staff, as well as staff from other PDPH Divisions and City Agencies. The fellow will also be given field experience by touring the Medical Examiner's Office, shadowing restaurant inspectors and STD field investigation staff, visiting Prevention Point, methadone clinics, and the Philadelphia Prisons, and helping with chart abstraction at provider offices. This orientation period will help the Fellow to become more familiarized with PDPH and DBHIDS activities and allow him/her to choose a long-term project for the fellowship. The fellow will then undergo specific training to become familiar with all of the major opioid-related datasets and how they are currently being used to inform prevention and response activities, identify barriers and opportunities for optional system interactions with individuals, and assess the progress and impact of actions and interventions undertaken to address the opioid crisis.

In addition to these routine activities the fellow will be expected to work on analytic and surveillance projects associated with fellowship competencies. The Fellow will be invited to attend other DDC and DBHIDS program meetings in order to explore the possibility of analytical projects outside of opioid surveillance and prevention in their second year.

Potential Projects

Surveillance Non-fatal Overdose Investigations Activity

Opioid-related hospitalizations are increasing in Philadelphia. The city is proposing to make non-fatal overdoses reportable to PDPH and/or to work with hospital ERs with the largest burden of overdose to obtain identifiable information on overdose victims within 24 hours of intake. This project would entail following up with patients to obtain demographic, clinical, and risk factor information and to refer for drug treatment or harm reduction services.

Surveillance Validate Accuracy of Fatal Overdose Data Captured by Death Certificates Evaluation

This project would validate the accuracy of death certificate data in capturing overdose deaths by matching this dataset to Philadelphia Medical Examiner data. Comparisons between death certificate and Medical Examiner data would be made for different drug types, including prescription opioids, heroin, methadone, benzodiazepines, and cocaine.

Major Project Defining the Trajectory Towards Overdose Among People Who Use Drugs

There has been a nationwide increase in opioid drug use, and overdose, among young people. This project would entail matching fatal overdose data from the Medical Examiner's Office to other city agencies (Department of Public Health, Office of Homeless Services, Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual disability Services, Community Behavioral Health, Office of Addiction Services, Department of Human Services, and Department of Prisons) to define those systems with which overdose decedents may have interacted in the years preceding their death. The ultimate goal would be to 1) characterize whether specific demographic or clinical factors correlate with an individual's likelihood to interact with one or more city systems and 2) inform policy for those systems that service clients at highest risk for overdose.

Additional Analyze historic syringe exchange data to assess changes in drug user trends Project

Illicit drug use is increasing at an alarming rate in Philadelphia, often beginning with an addiction to prescription opioid painkillers and later transitioning to heroin use. This project would involve the compilation of 20 years of client intake and support group data from Prevention Point (Philadelphia's syringe exchange program) to assess changes in drug use patterns and client testimonials over time. This is invaluable data that will hopefully lend insight into when and how the drug problem began to deteriorate in Philadelphia.

Major Project Establish the use of real-time data to support a public health based Rapid Response Plan.

This project would require the development of an algorithm for responding to a geographic cluster of fatal or non-fatal health events linked to suspected drug poisoning, law enforcement drug seizure, purchase, or investigation where potentially lethal drugs are identified. The algorithm would most likely utilize data reported from hospitals, the Medical Examiner, EMS, and Police, and be used to generate alerts that could be shared in real-time with city and community partners that serve at-risk populations.

Preparedness Role

The Fellow will participate in exercises developed by the Public Health Preparedness Program at PDPH. The Fellow will help to develop data collection tools for any exercises and will help conduct analysis on collected data.

Additional Activities

Additional activities in which a CSTE fellow can be involved include assisting in the development of overdose training and educational materials, updating the monthly Opioid Misuse and Overdose surveillance report, working with the Philadelphia-Camden High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (PA-HIDTA) to strategize about ways to foster partnership between law enforcement and public health entities, meeting with health care providers to develop collaborative relationships that will improve overdose reporting and surveillance, participation in internal data management and surveillance meetings, and presentation at local and national conferences. Additional special projects outside of the Opioid Program include development of provider education materials on childhood vaccinations and ways to increase practice vaccine coverage, surveying STD clinic attendees on satisfaction with visit and care, and conducting audits of immunization records from day care provider sites.

Mentors

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| Primary | Kendra Viner PhD, MPH
Opioid Program Manager |
| Secondary | Suet Lim PhD, D
Director of Research and Evaluation |