

# Master of Public Health Practicum Guidelines

## CU Anschutz Medical Campus

[ColoradoSPH.Practicum@cuanschutz.edu](mailto:ColoradoSPH.Practicum@cuanschutz.edu)

## MPH Practicum Overview

### Practicum Requirements

- All MPH students are required to successfully complete a practicum experience ( $\geq 120$  hours) in which the student demonstrates competencies and integrates public health knowledge.
- The MPH Practicum must take place in a governmental, non-governmental, non-profit, industrial, or for-profit setting. A practicum conducted in a university-affiliated setting will only be approved if the primary focus is on community engagement, typically with external partners. University-affiliated settings will be approved on a case-by-case basis by the practicum director/coordinator.
- The MPH Practicum must be mutually beneficial to both the student and the host site.
- The MPH Practicum must allow the student to demonstrate attainment of five competencies, three of which must be CEPH foundational competencies that can be found here: [https://coloradosph.cuanschutz.edu/docs/librariesprovider151/default-document-library/competencies-for-all-mph-graduates.pdf?sfvrsn=7c3efbb9\\_0](https://coloradosph.cuanschutz.edu/docs/librariesprovider151/default-document-library/competencies-for-all-mph-graduates.pdf?sfvrsn=7c3efbb9_0).
- Competencies for the MPH Practicum should be selected in collaboration with your academic advisor and/or preceptor. CEPH foundational competencies and concentration specific competencies are available here: [https://coloradosph.cuanschutz.edu/docs/librariesprovider151/default-document-library/competencies-for-all-mph-graduates.pdf?sfvrsn=7c3efbb9\\_0](https://coloradosph.cuanschutz.edu/docs/librariesprovider151/default-document-library/competencies-for-all-mph-graduates.pdf?sfvrsn=7c3efbb9_0).
- Each competency must be fully demonstrated by a product (more than one competency can be demonstrated through one product).
- A minimum of two products must be developed during the practicum.
  - All products developed during the practicum to demonstrate the five chosen competencies must be submitted for the practicum course.
- Interprofessional education (IPE) is a requirement of the practicum course. IPE occurs when people from two or more professions learn about, from, and with each other to enable effective collaboration and improve health outcomes. This refers to engagement with professionals outside of public health (e.g. architects, nurses, lawyers, city planners, marketing/communication professionals, law enforcement/police officers, politicians, teachers, curriculum specialists, nutritionists, large/small business owners, financial specialist/accountants, etc.) rather than to engagement with individuals from other public health disciplines (e.g. biostatisticians, health promotion specialists).
- The MPH Practicum host site and Preceptor must be approved by the Academic Advisor and/or Practicum Coordinator.
- Students must be registered for the Practicum course before logging hours toward the minimum 120-hour requirement. If a student is not registered for Practicum credits and is injured while working at the host site, the student may not be covered by the university liability/worker's compensation insurance.

## Goals of the Practicum Experience

- Apply classroom theory, knowledge, skills and techniques to a professional work setting
- Enhance and develop new skills needed to function as a professional in a public health setting
- Work on a defined public health problem/issue that is salient to the preceptor site
- Participate in a setting that allows the student to explore future career decisions
- Engage in professional self-assessment and personal reflection
- Build a personal network of professional leaders in public health
- Engage with the community
- Actively participate as a member of an interprofessional team to address a public health issue
- Connect with local and state public health agencies and other community-based organizations

## Practicum Process

- 1) Complete prerequisite requirements for Practicum:
  - a. Successfully complete the Foundations in Public Health course (CU/UNC) or Public Health Practice course (CSU)
  - b. Successfully complete 18 credits, including three core MPH courses
- 2) Begin early and allow adequate time to find a host site.
  - a. Students should begin searching for a host site at least one semester prior to the desired practicum for a domestic experience.
  - b. Students should begin searching for a host site at least two semesters prior to the desired practicum for an international experience.
- 3) Complete the Practicum Proposal including the learning plan, placement agreement and online certifications (see practicum proposal for a complete checklist)
- 4) Gain approval from Academic Advisor, community Preceptor and Practicum Coordinator/Instructor
- 5) Submit completed, signed proposal to the Practicum Coordinator and receive a permission number to register for the Practicum Course

## **Practicum Placement**

Since each student has a unique set of interests and skills, the practicum experience will be an individualized experience. The student will seek out a community agency/host site and a community Preceptor based on their set of interests and skills. The practicum experiences of students are flexible, but the following guidelines will be used to assess appropriateness of practice placement:

- Requires students to apply graduate level competencies
- Engages students in addressing a specific public health issue in a field setting
- Advances students' competencies and knowledge in public health practice
- Exposes students to the ten Essential Services of Public Health
- Has specific, defined project goals with products/deliverables
- Has a realistic time frame that is appropriate for a student to manage based upon their unique skills and knowledge
- Has a Preceptor who has appropriate training to oversee the student and/or project, is willing to agree to Preceptor responsibilities outlined in the project learning plan, and is approved by the MPH Practicum coordinator
- Enhances the students' professional network, career potential and professional development

## **Establishing a Practicum Host Site and Preceptor**

The responsibility of creating an exceptional Practicum experience ultimately lies on the student. However, the student is not alone in this pursuit. The student will work closely with their faculty advisor and the Practicum Coordinator(s) to receive support and guidance to ensure an enriching experience.

To start the placement process a student should:

- Review Practicum prerequisites and requirements
- Review the Practicum Proposal document
- Create an account on Handshake to review opportunities
- Meet with a Practicum Coordinator and/or attend a Practicum Information Session. The Practicum Coordinator(s) may be reached at [ColoradoSPH.Practicum@cuanschutz.edu](mailto:ColoradoSPH.Practicum@cuanschutz.edu).

## **Responsibilities of Preceptor and Host Sites**

The goal of the Practicum is to help the student grow personally and professionally for a career in the field of public health. The experience is designed to provide students with an opportunity to develop professional skills in a public health setting, while contributing to the needs of an organization. The school recognizes that this goal requires the support and commitment from community partners that are practicing public health in various settings. The primary responsibilities of a host site and Preceptor are to:

- Work with students to develop a realistic graduate level Practicum experience within the time commitment and student schedule
- Provide the student with a background about the organization and project
- Be available to meet with the student, provide supervision, and constructive feedback
- Provide resources for students to complete project (i.e. office space, computer, access to data)
- Provide written feedback for the student and the school by completing evaluation forms midway through Practicum (after the student has completed ~ 60 hours) and at the end of the Practicum experience (final evaluation).
- Support students in professional development activities (i.e. include in staff meetings, introduce organizational leaders, invite to professional events, etc.)
- Support the student in finding an opportunity for them to engage in interprofessional education (IPE).
- IPE occurs when people from two or more professions learn about, from, and with each other to enable effective collaboration and improve health outcomes. This refers to engagement with professionals outside of public health (e.g. architects, nurses, lawyers, city planners, marketing/communication professionals, law enforcement/police officers, politicians, teachers, curriculum specialists, nutritionists, large/small business owners, financial specialist/accountants,) rather than to engagement with individuals from other public health disciplines (e.g. biostatisticians, health promotion specialists).

## **Preceptor and Host Site Benefits**

The Practicum experience adds great value to the student's development. In addition, having a student professional onsite also provides benefits to the host organization. For example:

- Students complete or conduct projects the organization may not have capacity to otherwise accomplish
- Students provide an inquisitive approach and may provide creative ideas and solutions
- Students build professional capacity and may be recruited to become part of the organization's workforce
- Organizations and Preceptors have an impact on the field of public health by participating in the education of future professionals

## **Practicum and Capstone at the Same Host Site**

A student may choose to “link” their Practicum with their Capstone project. For example, during the Practicum the Preceptor and/or student may identify an extended project that requires more than the minimum 120 hours for completion and culminates into a product that meets the requirements for the Capstone project. This possibility should be explored between the Preceptor and the student at the beginning of the Practicum experience, although in some cases the possibility for a Capstone project may be identified during, rather than prior to, the Practicum experience.

## **Global Practicum Requirements**

Students who desire to complete their Practicum abroad must:

- Complete EHOH 6633 or complete a waiver that describes their past public health work abroad. Waivers may be requested from [ColoradoSPH.Practicum@cunschutz.edu](mailto:ColoradoSPH.Practicum@cunschutz.edu)
- Complete the Office of Global Education (OGE) requirements and gain approval for travel before registering for the practicum course. Nicole Herrin is the Global Education Associate for CUAnschutz ([Nicole.Herrin@ucdenver.edu](mailto:Nicole.Herrin@ucdenver.edu)).