

Connecticut DPH Internship and Public Health Fellowship Program

Preceptor Guidebook

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Public Health

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This guidebook provides supplementary information for Connecticut Public Health Fellowship Program Preceptors (CT PHFP). Preceptors and alternate preceptors are encouraged to review these resources, including the CT PHFP Program Guidebook, and to reach out with any questions or support needs.

Cover: New London Harbour “Pequot” Light. Photo used with permission from the Custom House Maritime Museum in New London, Connecticut.

Contact Information

For additional information, including state practice and academic partner organizations, please visit the [Connecticut Department of Public Health Internship Webpage](#) or contact DPH.internship@ct.gov.

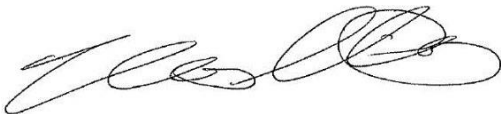
To our Public Health Partner Agencies and Preceptors:

Whether you work at the state health department, a local health jurisdiction, or a community public health organization, the goal of all public health practitioners is to serve our communities and break down barriers to good health. On behalf of the Commissioner and our entire organization, we are grateful that you have answered the call to work with an aspiring public health professional and to encourage future generations of our public health workforce to address the needs of our communities.

We are committed to supporting a mutually beneficial experience for you as a preceptor, the students you will mentor, our academic partners, and the public health agencies involved in this program. To this end, we have outlined some expectations for our host agencies, our students, and ourselves, and we commit to supporting you and the students throughout this process to form collaborative and equitable partnerships. Your guidance and expertise will help the students make connections in the small world of public health practice in our state, and to grow in knowledge, confidence, and leadership, which will shape the future of public health in Connecticut.

This guidebook will assist you in this journey. We hope it provides you with the supplementary information you need to succeed in your role as a preceptor in the Connecticut Public Health Fellowship Program. If at any point throughout the process you have a need for guidance or information, please do not hesitate to reach out to me directly and I will be sure that you have everything you need for you and our students to be successful.

Thank you and be well,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Thomas St. Louis', with a stylized, cursive flourish at the end.

Thomas St. Louis, MSPH

Director, Public Health Workforce Development, Connecticut Department of Public Health

Getting ready to be a Public Health Preceptor

A public health preceptor is the supervisor and guide for students' learning experience as they move from the classroom to apply and advance core public health competencies and enter the workforce.

The list below is for your reflection as you prepare to take on this important role:

- Can you dedicate time for regular and consistent meetings and communication with the students?
- Is an alternate preceptor available to support the student's learning when the primary preceptor is away?
- Is the fellowship role or project feasible for the student to complete within the timeline identified?
- Is the role or project appropriate for the student's training and skill level, and support will be provided to ensure they can learn from and reflect on these experiences?
- How will you identify additional learning opportunities for the fellow, particularly related to the ten essential public health services, social determinants of health, and public health equity?
- If the student needs specific accommodation, can you work with the organization and academic institution to provide this?
- What hopes or concerns do you have about the preceptor role for a student's public health learning experience?

Preparing for the intern/fellow checklist

This is a general checklist to use as a reference for all phases of the fellowship experiences.

<p>Preparing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Notify relevant agency staff about the fellow’s placement, including their role, start date, and any pertinent background information. <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure the fellow has access to all necessary resources, as applicable: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A clean and functional workspace • Computer and required software • Agency email account(s) • Printer access • Reliable internet connection • Telephone and voicemail access <input type="checkbox"/> Confirm whether the fellow requires any work-related accommodations, and ensure they are in place prior to the start date. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide general information about the work location, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking options and commuting guidance • On-site safety procedures • Nearby food options and amenities • Share detailed arrival instructions for the fellow’s first day <input type="checkbox"/> Develop a schedule for the fellow’s first day and week that may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductions to key personnel • Scheduled meetings or orientations • Review of essential documents and materials • Completion of required training
<p>First week</p>	<p>Orientation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Provide an overview of the agency’s mission, strategic priorities, and its role within the broader public health ecosystem in the state of Connecticut. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide a tour of the office including workspace and shared spaces (i.e. mailroom, printers, supply storage, kitchen, bathrooms, etc.) <input type="checkbox"/> Facilitate introductions to agency leadership and team members <input type="checkbox"/> Review staff meetings and other standing activities <input type="checkbox"/> Review required training and policies relevant to the worksite and activities (i.e. data privacy, data security, email, internet use, emergency procedures, etc.) <input type="checkbox"/> Review agency-specific Artificial AI Use policies. <p>Paperwork and required tasks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Confirm whether the fellow will be receiving academic credit for the fellowship and identify any associated requirements or responsibilities for the agency and/or preceptor. <input type="checkbox"/> Collaborate with the fellow to complete the Connecticut Public Health Fellowship Program (CT PHFP) Learning Plan Agreement, ensuring alignment with program objectives and expectations.

	<p>IT and Logistics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure the fellow receives appropriate access credentials, including identification badges, login information for devices, and permissions for shared drives or systems they will need to use. <input type="checkbox"/> Confirm that the fellow has access to all necessary software and tools required to perform their assigned tasks effectively. <input type="checkbox"/> Arrange for VPN or remote desktop access if offsite or remote computer connectivity is needed. <input type="checkbox"/> Facilitate effective communication by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Providing an overview of communication protocols and expectations. <input type="checkbox"/> Introducing the fellow to key personnel with whom they will be working regularly. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide the fellow with access to relevant departmental directories, including contact information for key staff and resources. <input type="checkbox"/> Establish preferred methods and expectations for regular communication, including typical hours of availability for both the preceptor and the fellow.
On-going	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Share observations on the fellow’s performance and encourage reflection on completed activities and learning outcomes. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide opportunities for bi-directional feedback, fostering open communication and continuous improvement. <input type="checkbox"/> Maintain ongoing communication regarding roles, responsibilities, and expectations to ensure alignment throughout the fellowship. <input type="checkbox"/> Verify that all required training has been completed in accordance with program and agency guidelines. <input type="checkbox"/> Conduct regular check-ins to review progress on the Learning Plan Agreement, discuss any challenges, and identify emerging needs or support areas. <input type="checkbox"/> Reassess training interests and developmental goals; evaluate the potential for assigning additional tasks or responsibilities to enhance the fellow’s experience.
End of fellowship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Provide timely and constructive observations on the fellow’s performance to support professional growth and development. <input type="checkbox"/> Facilitate opportunities for bi-directional feedback, allowing both the fellow and the preceptor/agency to exchange insights and perspectives on the fellowship experience.

Overview of preceptor role and responsibilities

The CT PHFP aims to strengthen the future pathway of talented public health professionals into careers in public health across Connecticut. Our hope is that preceptors are excited about the opportunity to mentor and develop their ability to supervise and coach a fellow. Moreover, preceptors should be prepared for the additional work and time that may be required to ensure the roles of the preceptor are met.

Preceptor and Alternate Preceptor

Overview

A preceptor serves as a day-to-day supervisor, mentor, and role model for a CT PHFP fellow. The preceptor will commit time to guide the learning experience of the student, provide ongoing feedback on their work, and participate in the CT PHFP evaluation.

The alternate preceptor is a second point of connection at the host agency for the student and should be available in the event the preceptor is not available due to work or personal obligations.

Eligibility

- Works with the public health host agency in Connecticut.
- Approximately 5 years of public health or related experience, or
- Public health-related degree and at least 2 years of related experience

Responsibilities

- Provide the student with an orientation to the host agency, including the safety considerations, policies, and procedures within which the student is to operate.
- Model professional practice and conduct.
- Identify a range of learning opportunities for the fellow and provide the fellow with exposure to a variety of practice experiences within the agency or community.
- Arrange regular meetings with the fellow, provide constructive professional feedback, and be available as needed, including providing coordination of any additional persons who will work with the student.
- Clarify the explicit and implicit working norms of the field placement role and host agency norms.
- Maintain open communication with PHFP staff and notify the PHFP of any issues with the fellowship placement and engage in solution-seeking efforts

Required

Documentation

1. Complete a Field Placement Proposal Application
2. Sign a Fellow Learning Plan Agreement
3. Complete a PHFP final evaluation when requested

Summer Internship Program student requirements

Summer interns are required to attend in-person orientation and weekly peer-to-peer workshops at the DPH office in Hartford, Connecticut. Students must attend 70% of all CT DPH structured internship programming events.

Students are expected to notify their preceptors and the Office of Public Health Workforce Development in advance if they have challenges in attending. Students will be required to make up any missed sessions by completing alternative assignments, virtual training, webinars, or attending community events that cover the core competencies.

Resources for Preceptors

The following resources are available to support preceptors in providing meaningful, effective learning experiences for students and fellows. These resources offer guidance on mentoring students, supporting career development, and strengthening internship and fellowship experiences within public health practice settings.

Student Career Pathways Toolkit

The Student Career Pathways Toolkit was developed by the [New England Public Health Training Center](#) to help organizations create and implement effective student pathways into public health careers. The toolkit is designed to reduce the burden on individual organizations developing new pathway programs, support preceptors mentoring students, support the evaluation and improvement of existing initiatives, and ultimately contribute to a stronger, more resilient local public health workforce.

Access the toolkit here:

<https://sites.bu.edu/nephtc/students/student-pathways/>

Preceptor Training on CT TRAIN

Training Title: Creating a Valuable Internship Experience: Training for Mentors and Preceptors

This training provides guidance for mentors and supervisors on how to structure meaningful internship experiences, support student learning, and foster professional development during public health placements.

This training will prepare participants to:

- Explain the difference between a preceptor and a supervisor/boss
- Define what an internship project is
- Identify what makes an effective preceptor or mentor
- Name the mutual benefits of an internship for a preceptor, host agency, and student
- Describe tools to create a valuable internship experience
- Understand the difference between implicit and explicit norms and expectations

Access the training here:

<https://www.train.org/main/course/1135122/details>

Motivational interviewing for supervision and mentorship

Motivational interviewing (MI) is a goal-oriented style of communication that emphasizes change through reflective learning. Incorporating this communication style into on-going discussions with students and mentees can strengthen focus on specific goals by eliciting and exploring the person's goals, motivations, and interests.¹

The **O.A.R.S.** framework, for motivational interviewing, can be used during check-ins and reflective discussions between preceptors and learners. This approach emphasizes active listening and curiosity, rather than directing or teaching, to guide and empower the learning toward their self-identified learning objectives, problem-solving, and clear communication.

Open-ended questions	<p>Encourages students to share their thoughts, feelings, and experiences in detail and reflectively. Open-ended questions facilitate deeper conversation and foster learning for both students and preceptors.</p> <p><i>"What components of this project have you practiced before? How do you plan to approach this task?"</i></p>
Affirmations	<p>Affirmations are positive statements that recognize a person's strengths, efforts, and qualities, helping to build their confidence and reinforce their existing strengths. To be meaningful, affirmations should be authentic and honest.</p> <p><i>"You've put a lot of effort into this project, and it shows in the questions you raise in our discussions!"</i></p> <p><i>"I admire your resilience in tackling the challenges of this activity."</i></p>
Reflection	<p>Reflections are statements that convey the essence of what the student has communicated to help them clarify thoughts/feelings, encourage further exploration, and validate experiences</p> <p>Intern: <i>"I want to contribute more ideas to the team meetings since I like adding to the project. But I hesitate because I'm not sure if my ideas are good."</i></p> <p>Preceptor: <i>"You're a bit nervous about it, but you'd like to share more of your ideas with the team."</i></p>
Summaries	<p>Summaries synthesize several ideas, reinforce important points, and set the stage for further growth and development. Summarizing also ensures that both the preceptor and the students have a shared understanding of progress and goals.</p>

Resources:

- [Understanding Motivational Interviewing](#)
- Additional examples are provided in the [Training Creating a Valuable Internship Experience: Training for Mentors and Preceptors](#)

¹ Miller, W. R., & Rollnick, S. (2013). *Motivational interviewing: Helping people change* (3rd edition). The Guilford Press.

CEPH Expectations for Public Health Practice Experiences

The [Council on Education for Public Health](#) (CEPH) is the accreditation body for public health programs and schools. Not all interns are in public health degree programs or at CEPH-accredited schools. These guidelines help clarify the level of experience expected at each educational level. CEPH requires that public health students have “opportunities to integrate, synthesize, and apply knowledge through cumulative and experiential activities.”¹

Training level	Requirement	Summary Description ²
Undergraduate- Bachelor of Science in Public Health (BSPH)	Cumulative and experiential activities	All students complete a cumulative, integrative, and scholarly or applied experience or inquiry project that serves as a capstone to the education experience. These experiences may include but are not limited to internships, service-learning projects, senior seminars, portfolio projects, research papers, or honors theses. Schools and programs encourage exposure to local-level public health professionals and/or agencies that engage in public health practices.
Graduate- Master of Public Health (MPH)	Applied Practice Experience (APE)	All students will demonstrate attainment of at least five competencies, of which at least three must be foundational competencies. Review of the student’s performance in the APE must be based on at least two practical, non-academic work products AND on validating that the work products demonstrate the student’s attainment of the designated competencies. Examples of suitable work products include project plans, grant proposals, training manuals or lesson plans, surveys, memos, videos, podcasts, presentations, spreadsheets, websites, photos, or other digital artifacts of learning.
Doctoral- Doctor of Public Health (DrPH)	Advanced Public Health Practice	Regardless of prior experience, all DrPH students engage in one or more applied practice experience in which students are responsible for the completion of at least one project that is meaningful for an organization and to advance public health practice. The deliverable must contain a reflective component that includes the student’s expression of personal and/or professional reaction to the applied practice experience. Host agencies should benefit from students’ experiences. The school or program identifies a minimum of five foundational and/or concentration-specific competencies that are reinforced and/or assessed through application.

¹ Council on Education for Public Health. Accreditation Procedures. Amended December 2024.

² Council on Education for Public Health. Accreditation Criteria. Amended December 2024.

Fair Labor: Internship or Employment?

The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) provides protections for students and unpaid interns. Essentially, it asks if an internship opportunity is unpaid labor or a valuable learning opportunity for the student. To assess this, a seven-point “primary beneficiary test” can be used to assess the economic reality of the intern-employer relationship. This test considers the extent to which the internship is tied to the student's formal education program, complements and doesn't displace a paid worker, and the joint expectation of interns and employees regarding compensation.³ Interns in Connecticut are protected by the Connecticut Public Act 15-56 and are entitled to protection from discriminatory workplace practices.⁴

Please note: This information is provided as a reference and is not legal advice. Please refer to your organization's policies and legal counsel for guidance.

Internship Primary Beneficiary Test:

1. The extent to which the intern and the employer clearly understand that there is no expectation of compensation. Any promise of compensation, express or implied, suggests that the intern is an employee—and vice versa.
2. The extent to which the internship provides training is similar to that which would be given in an educational environment, including the clinical and other hands-on training provided by educational institutions.
3. The extent to which the internship is tied to the intern's formal education program by integrated coursework or the receipt of academic credit.
4. The extent to which the internship accommodates the intern's academic commitments by corresponding to the academic calendar.
5. The extent to which the internship's duration is limited to the period in which the internship provides the intern with beneficial learning.
6. The extent to which the intern's work complements, rather than displaces, the work of paid employees while providing significant educational benefits to the intern.
7. The extent to which the intern and the employer understand that the internship is conducted without entitlement to a paid job at the conclusion of the internship.

³ U.S. Department of Labor (2018). Internship Programs under the Fair Labor Standards Act.

⁴ Connecticut General Assembly. (2015). Public Act No. 15-56: An Act Protecting Interns from Workplace Harassment and Discrimination.

CT DPH Student Pathway Programs: Learning Plan Agreement

The Learning Plan Agreement is a tool to outline the agreed activities and responsibilities associated with this field placement and learning objectives. Students and preceptors should discuss and complete this agreement together in the first 1-2 weeks of the student's internship/fellowship.

The student should fill in the following:

I. Student Information	
Name:	
University/Department:	
Program/Major:	Graduation Semester/Year:
Email:	Cell Phone:
Will this placement be used to meet an academic requirement? Yes No	
If yes, what are the academic requirements that the preceptor and host agency should be aware of?	

The preceptor should fill in the following:

II. Agency Information	
Agency Name:	
Agency Preceptor	
Name:	Title:
Preferred contact:	
Agency Preceptor Alternate (highly recommended)	
Name:	Title:
Preferred contact:	

The student and preceptor should fill in the following together:

III. Field Placement Information (If start and end dates change, please notify the program team.)	
Start Date at Agency:	End Date at Agency:
Description of student's schedule:	
Have the student and preceptor agreed on hybrid or remote schedule? Yes No	
Please describe plans for regular check-ins and communication if the internship will be remote/hybrid or asynchronous:	
Estimated Total Number Hours:	

IV. Selection of Core Competencies for Field Placement

Is the student completing a:

- Required experiential activities (Bachelor' of Public Health)
- Required Applied Practice Experience (master's in public health)
- Other required academic learning experience
- Other unrequired experience for professional development

Instructions to identify core competencies:

Step 1 - Preceptor: Select 10 competencies that the student may have opportunity to practice and strengthen during the field placement.

Step 2 - Student: Select 5 of the competencies identified by the preceptor that you would like to focus on strengthening during the project period.

Step 3 - Student & Preceptor: Review and discuss these competencies and how the field placement will provide opportunities to gain experience in these areas.

Preceptor	Student	COMPETENCY DOMAIN/STATEMENT
		The Council on Linkages between Academia and Public Health Practice created the following list of core competencies. There are eight domains with the corresponding competencies listed below:
		Domain 1: Analytical/Assessment Skills
		1.1. Describes factors that affect the health of a community
		1.2. Accesses existing quantitative and qualitative data
		1.3. Collects quantitative and qualitative data
		1.4. Analyzes quantitative and qualitative data
		1.5. Manages quantitative and qualitative data
		1.6. Uses quantitative and qualitative data
		1.7. Applies public health informatics in using data, information, and knowledge
		1.8. Assesses community health status
		Domain 2: Policy Development/Program Planning Skills
		2.1. Develops policies, programs, and services
		2.2. Implements policies, programs, and services
		2.3. Evaluates policies, programs, services, and organizational performance
		2.4. Improves policies, programs, services, and organizational performance
		2.5. Influences policies, programs, and services external to the organization
		2.6. Engages in organizational strategic planning
		2.7. Engages in community health improvement planning
		Domain 3: Communication Skills
		3.1. Determines communication strategies
		3.2. Communicates with internal and external audiences
		3.3. Responds to information, misinformation, and disinformation
		3.4. Facilitates communication among individuals, groups, and organizations
		Domain 4: Health Equity Skills
		4.1. Applies principles of ethics, diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice
		4.2. Engages in continuous self-reflection about one's biases
		4.3. Recognizes the diversity of individuals and populations

		4.4. Reduces systemic and structural barriers that perpetuate health inequities
		4.5. Implements organizational policies, programs, and services to achieve health equity and social and environmental justice
		4.6. Contributes to achieving and sustaining a diverse, inclusive, and competent public health workforce
		4.7. Advocates for health equity and social and environmental justice
Domain 5: Community Partnership Skills		
		5.1. Describes conditions, systems, and policies affecting community health and resilience
		5.2. Establishes relationships to improve community health and resilience
		5.3. Maintains relationships that improve community health and resilience
		5.4. Collaborates with community members and organizations
		5.5. Shares power and ownership with community members and others
Domain 6: Public Health Sciences Skills		
		6.1. Describes systems, policies, and events impacting public health
		6.2. Applies public health sciences in delivering the 10 Essential Public Health Services
		6.3. Uses evidence in developing, implementing, evaluating, and improving policies, programs, and services
		6.4. Contributes to the evidence base for improving health
Domain 7: Management and Finance Skills		
		7.1. Describes factors that affect the health of an organization
		7.2. Secures human resources
		7.3. Manages human resources
		7.4. Engages in professional development
		7.5. Secures financial resources
		7.6. Manages financial resources
		7.7. Implements organizational policies, programs, and services to achieve diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice
		7.8. Manages programs and services
		7.9. Engages in contingency planning
		7.10. Applies critical thinking in decision making
		7.11. Engages individuals and teams to achieve program and organizational goals
		7.12. Facilitates collaboration among individuals, groups, and organizations
		7.13. Engages in performance management
Domain 8: Leadership and Systems Thinking Skills		
		8.1. Creates opportunities to achieve cross-sector alignment
		8.2. Implements a vision for a healthy community
		8.3. Addresses facilitators and barriers impacting delivery of the 10 Essential Public Health Services
		8.4. Creates opportunities for creativity and innovation
		8.5. Responds to emerging needs
		8.6. Manages organizational change
		8.7. Engages politicians, policymakers, and the public to support public health infrastructure
		8.8. Advocates for public health

V. Placement-Specific Tasks & Outcomes for the Fellow

List the primary tasks and outcomes during the placement. Use the selected list of core competencies in Section IV to correlate which task/responsibility will provide experiential opportunity for the identified core competencies.

Task (Activities and Assignments)	Outcome (Process Goals and Products)	Core Competency
Ex: Design a needs assessment	Ex: Needs Assessment tool	Ex: 1.3

VI. Self-paced trainings (Required for CT PHFP)

[CT TRAIN](#) is a learning management platform used by public health professionals free for anyone to access and use. CT PHFP Fellows are required to complete two self-paced training courses on CT TRAIN. Review the training available and select at least two training courses to complete during the fellowship placement. See [Health Equity Training Plan](#) trainings for ideas.

No.	Training Title
1	
2	
3 (Optional)	
4 (Optional)	

Statement of Understanding

During this field placement experience, the student and the agency agree to the Learning Plan Agreement as outlined in this document, as well as take responsibility for the following:

Student Commitments

- Attend an orientation session(s)
- Engage in your internship placement following the agreed-upon number of hours and schedule. Notify your preceptor in advance of any changes to your schedule.
- Fulfill the tasks and deliverables described in this Learning Plan Agreement
- Participate in the final exit survey.
- If using this experience to meet an academic requirement, 1) abide by policies and requirements of the degree program and university, and 2) notify your preceptor beforehand of their school's policies or requirements that may need to be reflected in the experience.
- If the field placement involves human subjects research, the fellow is responsible for seeking IRB approvals from academic institutions and host agencies.
- CT PHFP students:
 - Complete at least 2 CT Train Courses
 - Participate in progress and evaluation surveys, as requested.
 - Complete the required financial forms
- All Summer Internship Program students must attend at least 70% of CT DPH activities.

Agency and Preceptor Commitments

- Supervise, mentor, and provide the necessary time and resources to the fellow to ensure assigned tasks and deliverables can be completed during the placement and the fellow has the opportunity to develop the selected competencies.
- Orient to the host agency and relevant agency policies and procedures (IRB, HIPAA, safety, etc.).
- Be available to the student as needed and provide close coordination with any additional persons who will work with the student.
- Complete program evaluation exit surveys.
- If the student uses the experience as a formal practicum experience or degree requirement, complete any documentation required by the academic program.

I acknowledge that I have reviewed this document and agree to fulfill my commitments as outlined in this document.

Student: _____ Signature _____ Date _____

Preceptor: _____ Signature _____ Date _____