



USC MPH: LA County Internships

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Speaker 1: We are really lucky today to have Susanna Lam come. Susanna has her MPH here from USC. She got it a few years ago, and she is the training coordinator for the office, it's called Organizational Development and Training Unit, or program, of LA County Department of Public Health. She also works very closely with the Public Health Scholars program, and other programs that she will talk about today, including internships and volunteer opportunities. I will turn it over to Susanna, and let's give her a nice warm welcome.

Speaker 2: Thank you, Jane. Okay. Welcome everyone. I'm really happy to be here today just to share with you a little bit about LA County, and also some opportunities that you can partake in. I wanted to be able to make this easy for you, and that's why I'm here today. I wanted to make it something that's a little bit more streamlined so that you understand what it is that you're getting into and just what the opportunities are in LA County, in terms of our department.

How many of you have already had a chance to do anything with our department before? Anybody? No? Not at all? Okay. Have you visited our website? Yes? What have you guys been seeing at the website? What are you guys doing?

Internship programs? Okay, so you've seen the internship page. Student worker, so student professional worker through the HR website, right? Okay. Good. I just wanted to get an idea what your interests are, in terms of how we can serve you, because at organizational development and training, that's what we want.

We want to build the workforce. That's really what my goal is. I am trying to raise leaders, and I'm trying to bring you guys in as fresh students turning into seasoned professionals. A lot of us, like, for example, me, I was a student here. I wasn't a student, necessarily, here in this building because I graduated a while ago. I am class of '02, and I am the third graduating class in SC for the MPH program.

I was here when we were at Health Science campus first for one semester, and then we moved over to the Alhambra site, and then we came, and then that's where I graduated and then came back. You guys have this beautiful campus, this building, for you, so that was my journey, and my journey continued. I have been at LA County Department of Public Health for 11 years already. I can't believe how fast time flies. I came in as a health educator with the Lead Poisoning Prevention program, and under environmental health.

The sky really is the limit. There are so many things that I learned being under lead programs. I learned how to do health promotion, evaluation, all of our outreach activities, healthy development, and so a lot of things that you really don't get a chance to really do while you're in school, unless you're doing something like a practicum, or an internship or something, a volunteer position. I'm going to talk a little



bit about what that looks like.

What we're going to do is I'm going to go through the slides really quick, going to go through some of the information, and then I'll give you guys a chance to ask me questions if I didn't answer anything, and then I'll go into Public Health Scholars. How many of you are here for Public Health Scholars? Okay. That means, I'm hoping the rest of you, this might be the first time you've heard of it, or to introduce you to what the program is and encourage you to apply for 2016. At the county, we really believe in is Healthy People Building Healthy Communities.

What's the difference between public health, or DPH, and our health services, Department of Health Services? Does anyone talk about that in any of your classes? Yes? Health services. The answer is health services, the umbrella, and has public health underneath it, and actually, it's two separate departments. They're actually two of themselves. They operate independently.

Health services is what you see over on the Health Science campus. LA County, LA CUSC, is an example of part of DHS. DPH, we are focused more on building those healthy communities, whereas DHS Health Services focuses more on one-on-one acute care. They focus on treating the person and sending them back into the community. Whereas, public health, we're more focused on the whole, okay?

That's really what our goal is. We are huge. We have a lot of programs, more than 50 programs in DPH, and we have about 4,100 staff available, positions available, but only about 38 to 3900 are filled, okay? We work on about, I have to fix this, this is older, but it's a \$903 million budget, so about 900 million. Sounds like a lot, but compared to other departments, it's not as much as what other departments are getting.

We really have to figure out a way to stretch our dollars and get more bang for our buck, and that's why we focus on communities because if you can keep your community healthy, you can make a huge impact in that area. That's why it's so important that we go in this direction. If you are interested in anywhere in LA County, if you're not aware of how big LA County actually is, we divide our county into eight service planning areas, spots, okay? We've got Antelope Valley all the way at the top, it stretches all the way to the bottom to where Long Beach and the Torrance area are. Over to Pomona is the most eastern edge, all the way out to Malibu, which is the most western edge.

It's huge. We've got 10 million people. We are serving lots of people. We need to figure out, how are we going to take these 39, 4,000 people that we have and work with the community, and work, and do our collaborations and whatnot? Networking is really, really critical for most of the projects that we do here, or my ability to work with Jane as we're trying to get leaders to come into public health. That's our networking opportunity.

When I first came into the county, I came in as a health educator. I came in and I did



work with the community and coalition building, and all this kind of stuff, but then my trajectory turned out to be more workforce development. I want you to think outside your box because public health isn't just going out to the community and serving that particular community, okay? Right now, you are my customers. You are the people that I'm serving.

I'm trying to help get you guys through into the county to give you a good experience so that you can consider that as a career option, okay? That's something where, if you ever think about coming into the county as an intern, consider programs that may not necessarily be your, what's called a public health bread and butter programs, right? The ones where you're actually going out there and running surveys, and doing survey design, and evaluating all that data. I think that's something that people don't, necessarily, think about.

It definitely challenged me when I came into this position. I thought, "Well, how am I going to use my MPH to serve DPH, but do workforce development?" It's really, really helped. This is the first time I've ever been able to have colleagues that are MPH-level colleagues. When I was in environmental health, I had inspectors, those were my colleagues.

Trying to get stuff done was challenging sometimes because I had to justify, why is it okay to go into this community like that, and do this, and how is this intervention going to work? It was challenging, but it got done and I grew from that. Keep your options open is what I'm trying to get at. How many of you have reviewed any of these core functions of public health? I'm not going to go through this with you because I'm not here for that, but this is our universal language in public health.

Whether you're at the federal level, the county level, whether you're working for the state or private sector, when you're talking public health, we're always talking about where in this wheel do you fall? Whether it's assessment, policy development, and assurance. We have this eight-hour core functions class that we go through, and we expect as part of the mandatory trainings for our DPH staff, so we expect them to understand this concept to be able to know where they are and where their colleagues are, and how this whole process works so that we can get the work done, streamline the work. These are some of the different internship programs, or internship opportunities that you can get in touch with.

Our health education and promotion, Epi students can get into Epi, environmental health, healthy policy and management, and nutrition. There are more, too, but I wanted to really emphasize the fact that these are not, necessarily, mutually exclusive, okay? You can go into a program, and intention is to go and do health education, but you might be doing some data analysis and trying to figure out what is all the data that you're looking at that you've already collected? You're going to be going into different parts of Epi, for example.

You could be doing environmental health but still be doing health education, or you could be working in environmental health, like I was, and also doing policy



development, okay? They're not mutually exclusive, but they're definitely just some ideas, in terms of where we place students. Some of the things we want to grow and strengthen in our workforce, and in the students that come to the county, we want to be able to, not necessarily teach you, but emphasize the importance of being able to conduct these lit reviews. It's so important right now because they've been really focusing on what's called our evidence-based practice, so what works and what doesn't, and what does it say in the literature? That's going to justify your ability to get money, grants, write those grants.

We want you to be able to design surveys that are worth collecting the data, right? There are some surveys out there that are so poorly designed, people don't want to complete them, or they're really hard to. You can't get the people to take them at all. Being able to use Excel. Things at the county aren't, necessarily, super advanced, per say.

We don't usually use Access. Some programs do, but other programs, they usually use Excel. The SAS and the STATA, usually I'm hearing more of the SAS. Just to let you know that your skillset here might be preparing you for advanced-level data analysis and all that kind of stuff, but really, at the county, we do a lot of stuff that's still very Excel-based. It sounds weird for me to put this slide up here that says, "Prepare PowerPoint slides." If I asked you, "How many of you know how to do PowerPoint," you'd probably all put up your hands, but if I actually looked at them, they probably would be like, "This could be improved and that could be improved," right?

Even for me, I'm constantly looking at my slides trying to see what's the best way to do that. I think that things change over the years, in terms of how we want to design these slides and make them useful. A lot of times, because we've been using PowerPoint for so long, we become numb to this way of instructing, right? Being able to do that, it's health literate. Being able to do it so that it's worth showing, I think it's really important.

Drafting conference abstracts. There's opportunities to go out there and present, to do poster presentations, oral presentations on the projects that you're working on. That's another skillset that we also are looking for, and being able to write grants. You know that we consult a lot of the work out to do grant writing because we have awesome workers in the department, but not all of us know how to write grants.

Knowing how to write grants is really important because sometimes you could be this awesome writer, but if you can't write the grant the way that the funder expects, you may not get that money. You don't want to lose a grant because of that, okay? Some of the health education and promotion skills that we are looking for is, again, this evidence-based interventions. Being able to assist in the development of the interventions, implementing, evaluating, which is super important.

I remember the day in which evaluation is something we did not like to do. We did not incorporate it into a lot of our design, so we wanted to implement these projects and we had no way to evaluate. We didn't even know how to justify where we came from



and where we're going, and how do we know that it was successful, right? Being able to build that early on is really important.

Designing the curriculum and being able to associate and network with community members and people externally, very, very important. Some biostats and Epi skills, we're looking for. Being able to do data entry, using SAS to do cleanup and analysis, manuscripts, okay? Compiling different tables from different data sources and knowing and being able to determine whether it's a legit source, right?

GIS. GIS is the up and coming. It's been coming for a very long time. All I can say about that right now is the county has responded by opening up a track for GIS students to get jobs, okay? We used to have our health educator track where you come in as an MPH community health education, and that MPH student could only apply for those jobs, health educator jobs. Then we have the students that only have their Epi degree, okay? Their MPH Epi degree.

I can't apply for Epi jobs. The Epi person can't apply for my job, so the same thing for this. The GIS track, you have to have a GIS degree, a MPH with a GIS emphasis, okay? There is a track. If you go online, I can tell you guys later on the side, you can always go to DHR website and look up this class of specifications for the GIS items and the positions.

When I say items, I mean the positions. You can see what the GIS track looks like and see where the entry level is so that you can work your way up, okay? That's why I said up and coming, because for us to be able to create that type of track means that it's very important to us, and we think that there's a future in funding these positions. Some EH skills that are slightly different from health education skills and the other skills that we've talked about.

Outreach materials and all that is all the same, but dealing with food and retail is a very different game when it comes to them versus just your community members that are here to learn about sugar sweetened beverages and how much they contribute to obesity, okay? Reviewing different surveys, and they use a lot of databases in environmental health, so understanding those databases. Collecting and analyzing those types of things. Initiatives. A lot of policy development happening in environmental health, and researching information for risk communication and being able to work with systems.

A lot of systems involved. In this example, I put water systems. Tons and tons of health policy work is being done in the county. We are trying to streamline a way to actually track all of the different policies that are happening. There are so many all at one time, so we're trying to figure out a way to streamline all that, but being able to develop the briefings and the fact sheets, understanding your role as a county worker.

If you're going to go lobby or fight for a certain bill, you can't go up there and be lobbying. We serve as the subject matter experts. We are not allowed to go up there and do all that. We have to put our county hats on, we can't put our civilian hats on,



okay? Supposed to be very clear about that.

Assisting in developing, implementing, and evaluating different types of programs again, and going to summits, coalition building, just a lot of really great opportunities, and things in which, if you have experience in, make sure that's on your resume. Make sure it's highlighted in your resume. I'm going to be giving a copy of the slides over to the school, so if you want to review the slides, you'll be able to get that. I'm going to skip over this one.

When I said 50 programs, 50+ programs in the department, these are some of the programs that are listed, okay? I'm not going to go read them all, but these are just some of the different areas in which you could possibly be working in, okay? We're interspersed throughout the county, so let me see. A lot of our programs are downtown on Fig.

I work out on Wilshire and close to Commonwealth, so the court building over there. Our metroplex area by Normandie and Wilshire is where our Chronic Disease program is located, and there might be some other ones. Alhambra campus, whichever way it is, they house the Substance Abuse Prevention and Control program, lead programs. I was housed at Ferguson, which is the place where you would be doing all of your personnel stuff, so Live Scan and all that stuff once you get in, that building also has some programs in it, too. We're all over the place.

Some of you mentioned earlier that you've also gone to the website already. I want you to take some time to really to look at the website. It's pretty short. I tried to make it as brief as possible. Carlos Silva may not be that contact person anymore for the first section of this document, but as soon as I find out who it is, I'm going to update that on the website, okay? For now, go ahead and contact her if you need to for anything. I just wanted to make ...

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