



## Practicum Orientation

Hello. My name is Keisha Chandler, and I am the practicum coordinator for USC's MPH online program. Welcome to your practicum orientation. This video is designed to give you a virtual orientation to the practicum experience. I have compiled this presentation based on questions I receive often from students. If there is any question I have not addressed in this presentation, please feel free to contact me. I am available and happy to assist you. Let's get started.

The first natural question I receive is, 'When can I begin my practicum?' You can begin your practicum when all of your MPH core courses are complete; that includes 501, 508, 510, 512 and 529; at least one of your track core courses are complete; and you have a grade point average of at least 3.0 or above.

The next question I received is, 'When should I begin looking for a practicum?' My suggestion is to do so six months prior to registering for your practicum course. If you would like to begin your practicum in the spring of 2015, then I would say now would be an excellent time to start looking for organizations and health issues that are important to you.

The next question I hear is, 'How do I find a practicum site?' Your social network is the best place to begin. Tap into those folks who work in different cities or work in different states. You don't know who the people in your network have access to. The only way you will know is if you ask. Posting on LinkedIn, posting on Facebook and even Twitter is a good way to find folks who are working for sites you are interested in or just interesting people who may be able to reach your goal of finding a great practicum site.

One other strategy I find effective is to conduct what are called "informational interviews." They are extremely useful and an excellent way for you to get to know someone who is not in your normal social or professional circle. I find that if you are courteous and open in asking questions with them about their background, education, experience and a general knowledge of their field, it often helps spark some other questions that may help lead you to finding an appropriate practicum site. I find personally that when you show interest in others, they in turn show interest in you.

At the conclusion of those interviews, it is perfectly acceptable to ask if you can send them your CV or LinkedIn profile. Sometimes people get really nervous when they feel like you want something from them, so asking permission to send your resume with the reason being that you are in search of a practicum site and a place where you can be of contribution is a really nice way to open the door for them to either say, 'Yes, I would love to,' or politely decline.

Lastly, one strategy which has saved me many a times and looking for answers to questions that you, as students, even have is a Google search. If you typed in "Kings County public health," if you were living in Seattle, you would find probably millions of hits that have those keywords in them that may lead you to a small start up, that might lead you to a small nonprofit, or lead you to the Department of Health, but if you don't get curious and use this amazing tool



Google to find that you simply won't find the site. This is really a process that is driven by you as a student, and I encourage you to take full advantage of all of the resources you have.

Let's say you find a site you think you might be interested in and a practicum that you are really interested in. You need to be able to address and answer yes to all for these questions.

1. Are you able to address two general public health competencies and two track specific competencies?
2. Does your supervisor have a Master's level degree or higher? Those degrees need not be in public health, although it is a plus.
3. Does your agency having meaningful work to which you can contribute 300 hours? Remember, you are a Master's-level student, so the goal is for you to be competent and have mastery over the skills that are a part of your public health and track-specific competencies. While making coffee and copies is really important for an intern, you are a practicum student and this is designed for you to practice public health in the real world.
4. The last question you need to be able to say yes to is, 'Is your supervisor willing to approve your hours, sign off on your scope of work, and complete the supervisor evaluation form at the end of your hours?'

If the answer to those four questions is yes, then it sounds like you may have found your site.

What do you do once you find a practicum? I love it when I get these emails and the excited phone calls, and I am always excited that you are excited that you have found a place you can contribute your 300 hours to and really learned something new and fascinating. All you have to do is complete the practicum approval form and send it to me, the practicum coordinator.

The graphic to my right represents a timeline and the documents associated with that timeline to finalize and complete your practicum. As I mentioned previously, you will submit the practicum approval form to me (your practicum coordinator) once you find a site; however, we recognize that the sites in your state or city may not be USC-approved sites to complete your practicum. However, the process in which a site becomes an approved affiliate of USC is very simple. You will simply email the affiliation agreement and agency application to the senior administrator at the site you would like to complete your practicum. They, in turn, will complete those two documents with signatures and return them to me. It is as easy as that; after which you can proceed through your practicum experience with completing your scope of work along with your practicum learning contract, your mid-practicum check-in, self-evaluation, all the way until your final portfolio is due at the conclusion of the semester.

Once you have completed your 300 hours and your practicum portfolio, you are now ready to graduate. You are ready to step into the world as a degree-holding individual, a public health practitioner, and to share your strengths and gifts with the world. As an alumni of this program, I remember my graduation day. I remember sitting in that seat and listening to everyone speak about their experiences, our student speakers, the wonderful professionals who were invited to be at our commencement and participating in those exercises was one of the most important days of my life. As your practicum coordinator, I am here to support you so that can be a wonderful day you can share with your loved ones and friends.



Thank you so much for watching. If there are any questions or anything I didn't cover that you have a absolute burning question about, please do not hesitate to get in touch with me. I am happy to assist in any way I can. Thank you for watching.