

# **INTERNSHIP HANDBOOK AND GUIDELINES**

## **2012-2013**

**MASTER OF PUBLIC HEALTH PROGRAM  
IDAHO STATE UNIVERSITY**

ADAPTED FROM GUIDELINES CREATED AT THE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY

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## I. INTERNSHIP OVERVIEW

Public health practice is an integral part of the Master of Public Health (MPH) curriculum at Idaho State University.

### Purpose

An internship provides the opportunity to integrate classroom learning and practice in a public health work environment. The intern contributes to resources in the community and to the solution of public health problems while developing personal confidence and leadership as a public health professional.

A planned, supervised internship and the preparation leading to it foster professional development in several areas:

- The application of public health core knowledge and specialty skills
- The development of new practice-based skills
- Attention to professional self-assessment and personal growth

Emphasis is placed on demonstrating an awareness of how the internship activities and projects are part of a larger public health context.

A practice experience provides an important first step to a career in the field if a student has little or no prior experience. If the student has extensive experience or advanced degrees in other fields, they have the opportunity to apply existing skills at a higher level and to develop new professional skills in public health.

### Academic Requirements

The Kasiska School of Health Professions requires students pursuing the MPH degree to complete a supervised internship while registered at Idaho State University. The internship follows the first year of academic study in public health. **The student must have at least 18 graduate credit hours before doing an internship.** The internship must consist of at least 150 hours of supervised work, and the student must be enrolled in MPH 6655 for three credits. All sites selected for an internship must be approved by the academic advisor of the student. Internship assignments engage students in a process of goal setting, self-evaluation and critical reflection on the links between theory and practice. Evaluation of the internship will be based on input from the site supervisor. **Grading will be on a satisfactory/unsatisfactory basis.**

## Procedure for Establishing the MPH Internship

The following procedures will be followed by all students who are planning to register for an internship. Prior to registration the student needs to:

1. Contact his/her Academic Advisor to determine eligibility and to receive a brief orientation to the Internship process.
2. Review the MPH Internship Handbook available at the MPH website.
3. Select site and meet with site contact person or Supervisor to get accepted and set up duties and /or work projects. **ALL** internship placements require a contract between ISU and internship sites. The list of approved internship sites and the master contract sites is on the MPH website as well as the MPH Moodle page. If the student wishes to do their internship at a site which is not listed on the approved list or on the master contract list; they may speak with their academic advisor who will assist with developing a contract. **\*NOTE:** Contracts can take up to a month for the legal office to approve.
4. Fill out Self-Assessment paper work to review worksite competency skills and use as a negotiation tool when setting up any agreements with the Supervisor.
5. Fill out an internship agreement approval form, and obtain signatures of advisor and site Supervisor; the student needs to sign the form as well.
6. Provide the Academic Advisor with the signed approval form to insure that approval form is placed in the student file
7. If necessary obtain an override from the Academic Advisor to register for 3 credits of Internship.
8. Purchase ISU Student Malpractice Insurance (currently \$15.00) at the Cashiers Office in the main lobby of the ISU Administration Building, and provide proof of purchase to the MPH Director.

After registration the student must:

1. Provide the MPH Internship Supervisor with time sheets for their signature on a monthly basis. Times sheets must be signed by the Supervisor to be valid. Make a copy for yourself. Begin documenting hours worked using the time log by filling out the time worked and basic work activities (e.g., meetings, project, reports, research and any other activities required to complete a task).
2. When the student has met the 150 hours required to complete the internship, meet with the Academic Advisor and turn in the approved time log with the Internship Field Work Evaluation Form and the Evaluation of the Internship Site.

## I. INTERNSHIP OVERVIEW - CONTINUED

### Roles and Responsibilities

#### *Role of the Organization and the Supervisor*

The sponsoring organization agrees to provide a supervisor to oversee the student's internship. The supervisor should have expertise in assigned project areas, experience and status within the organization, and an interest and competence in supervising and mentoring. As a mentor, the supervisor shares organizational values, experiences and contacts with the student to facilitate a successful public health practice internship.

The supervisor provides an **orientation** to the organization and to the student's specific projects. This may include:

- describing the organizational mission and vision
- introducing the intern to key people within the organization
- arranging informational meetings with key personnel in student's area of interest
- providing information about the target population
- reviewing organizational policies and procedures
- familiarizing the intern with office equipment and procedures

**Projects** assigned to the student should meet the organization's needs as well as the student's learning objectives. The supervisor and academic advisor assist the student by providing access to the resources needed to complete the work. The student is encouraged to apply classroom learning. An ideal project allows the student to take initiative, work on a team and work with other disciplines.

The student benefits from **attending meetings** with management and other leaders within the organization and in the community to gain a better understanding of the broader context of the organization. The supervisor is encouraged to invite the student to observe special meetings and attend in-service trainings throughout the internship.

The supervisor meets with the student on a regular basis to discuss progress on projects and learning, as well as any issues that may arise as a result of the student's activities. Frequent **feedback** on both strengths and areas for improvement is crucial to the student's professional development.

As an option, conducting **informational interviews** with key individuals in the organization is another important way for students to gain a broad public health perspective and professional confidence.

### *Role and Responsibilities of the Student*

The internship provides exposure and access within organizations that graduates may not otherwise have the opportunity to experience during the early years of their public health careers. The student is expected to function as a professional, which is reflected in the projects and activities performed and in relationships with the organization's administrators and other staff. The student is responsible to the Supervisor for agreed upon projects and work duties.

Students are expected to:

- assist the Supervisor with management of the internship experience
- provide professional quality work
- comply with the policies and procedures of the organization
- integrate within the structure of the organization
- take initiative in designing or implementing a project
- complete academic and professional assignments related to the placement

### *Role and Responsibilities of the Academic Advisor*

Each student is assigned an Academic Advisor who assists the student in identifying professional and career objectives, clarifying learning objectives and identifying appropriate internship sites. The Academic Advisor can assist the supervisor in his/her role as educator, supervisor and mentor, and can provide technical assistance and access to the University's academic resources when requested.

The Academic Advisor is available by phone or e-mail throughout the internship to answer questions or to assist in the resolution of any problems.

### **Non-discrimination Statement**

Idaho State University in accordance with applicable State and Federal laws and University policy, does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability, age, medical condition (cancer-related), ancestry, marital status, citizenship, sexual orientation, or status as a Vietnam-era veteran or special disabled veteran. The University also prohibits sexual harassment. This nondiscrimination policy covers admission, access, and treatment in University programs and activities

## II. INTERNSHIP AGREEMENT

### **Purpose and Process**

The ***Internship Agreement*** is developed during the first two weeks of the internship by the student in consultation with the Supervisor and Academic Advisor.

The ***Internship Agreement*** describes and defines the working relationship between the student and the organization. It integrates the student's learning objectives and interests with the needs and opportunities of the site. This agreement is not a legal contract, but rather a tool for communication, monitoring, and evaluation of the practice experience. It may be modified during the internship by agreement among the student, the Supervisor, and the Academic Advisor.

The ***Internship Agreement*** consists of:

a. **Specifications**

Name of student, organization, Supervisor, start and end dates, stipend amount, work study (if involved), other compensation (such as conference, training, transportation, relocation allowances), Supervisor/student meeting frequency, and other logistics, working conditions or site requirements.

b. **Scope of Work**

A work plan detailing the student's learning objectives, proposed activities, evidence of learning/products, and timeline. The learning objectives are key in tying the student's academic learning with the practice skills and knowledge they gain during their internships. Further details on the learning objectives are provided below.

c. **Brief Description of Primary Projects**

d. **Expected Product**

A finished product the student delivers to the site during the internship.  
*Examples:* Report, web page, computer program, publication. (Note: these are not part of the final assignment)

e. **Signatures and Date**

Student, Supervisor, and Academic Advisor

The MPH Program has developed a recommended format for the ***Internship Agreement***. The student may use this or another format that conveys the elements of the internship.

## II. INTERNSHIP AGREEMENT -- CONTINUED

**Internship Agreement** in a concise, understandable manner that allows the student and Supervisor to monitor progress and make necessary adjustments. The Academic Advisor can provide examples of **Internship Agreements** from previous interns to assist the student in determining an appropriate format.

### **Learning Objectives in a Practice Setting**

The model provided by the student self assessment of professional skill competencies and academic practice categorizes students' learning into five related areas as described below. The **Internship Agreement** should include objectives in most of these areas.

#### **1. Public Health Skills and Competencies**

The technical skills and competencies required to be effective in a public health workplace and in the student's specialty area. These may include basic research, program planning and evaluation, policy, fiscal functions and computer skills.

#### **2. Core and Specialty Knowledge**

The core and specialty knowledge of public health and how it is applied in improving population health including in-depth knowledge of specific public health issues and specific populations.

#### **3. Leadership Skills and Abilities**

The art of integrating public health knowledge, theory, and practice and the ability to have an impact on the environment as a public health professional. This includes critical thinking, problem-solving, interdisciplinary teamwork, cultural competence, decision-making, communication and leadership.

#### **4. Context and Environment**

Systems and contexts within which public health organizations and professionals function, including funding sources, public policy, external relationships, social and economic inequalities, market trends, and other historical and current influences on public health. Organizational objectives include gaining work experience in a specific sector, organization, and work setting.

#### **5. Personal and Career Development**

General skills and knowledge which are essential to success in any professional field, such as organizing a complex job, working independently and as part of a team, setting goals and monitoring performance, assessing personal strengths and challenges. This includes exploring specific career interests, identifying trends and opportunities, developing networks, becoming familiar with occupational literature and associations.

## II. INTERNSHIP AGREEMENT - CONTINUED

### Tips for Writing Learning Objectives

Learning objectives form the basis of the Scope of Work and are written as measurable statements of the results the student wishes to achieve. A *learning objective* is a concise, measurable, and understandable statement of a change in competency, skill, knowledge, or understanding the student plans to gain. Learning objectives are written in the present tense and use action verbs which describe how learning will be demonstrated.

It is important to define the **level of mastery** which will be obtained when defining the outcome, e.g., identifying an issue vs. analyzing the issue, listing problems vs. evaluating problems. Clearly defined learning objectives are the foundation of a strong and successful internship.

Prior to beginning the internship, the student will have worked with the Academic Advisor, completing a self-assessment and preparation process. This includes writing broad learning objectives which help to refine and focus the student's areas of interest.

The student works with the Supervisor during the first two weeks of the internship to tailor the learning objectives to the specifics of the site and anticipated projects.

### III. MID-POINT REVIEW & EVALUATION

#### Purpose

The Mid-Point Review and Evaluation is a conference to ensure the internship experience is meeting the student's and Supervisor's needs and expectations. The purpose of the review is to:

- assess progress in achieving work assignments and learning objectives, including review of personal and professional growth and development
- identify and discuss learning issues, strengths and challenges, resource needs which have emerged during the internship
- update the ***Internship Agreement*** to reflect any changes

**Participants:** Student, Academic Advisor, Supervisor

**Facilitator:** Student

**Topics/Agenda:** Proposed by student, consensus by participants

**Duration:** 30-60 minutes, as needed

**Location:** On site, location arranged by student; phone conference if on-site visit not possible

The review is a time for reflection and feedback on how the internship is working out for the student, the Supervisor, and the organization. As facilitator, the student chooses a format for discussion which will promote a substantive and open exchange. While the format and content may vary, the ultimate goal of the Mid-Point Review and Evaluation is to help ensure that the internship is on track in providing a valuable learning experience for the student and that the student is making a contribution to the organization.

## IV. EVALUATION OF INTERNSHIP SITE

### **Purpose**

The purpose of the internship site evaluation is to allow the student reflect on the practice experience. This is an opportunity for the student to describe what was done, what was learned, and to place the experiences within the context of the organization, the community and the MPH program. The student should think creatively about his/her contribution to the profession and the professional value of the placement. The following outline is a guide.

The final evaluation should be drafted within **two weeks before the end of the internship** so that the Supervisor can review it to assure that the information is accurate prior to submission to the Academic Advisor

The Final Evaluation has the following three (3) sections.

#### **1. Organization Profile**

The Organization Profile is intended to reflect the student's understanding of the site based on their experience. It will be made available to future students considering the organization as a potential internship site. Information to be included:

- a. Name and location of the organization, division or department in which the student worked
- b. Supervisor's name and title
- c. Project Supervisor's name and title, if applicable
- d. Student's position in the organization with a brief explanation of why the student chose the internship site and project
- e. Mission/purpose and goals of the internship site
- f. Organizational structure, e.g. organizational chart, departments, qualifications or background of key professionals
- g. Programs and services offered
- h. Population(s) served including pertinent demographic/census information.
- i. Relationship of this organization to other regional, state or national organizations

#### **2. Organizational Analysis**

Factors determining policies and programs and the ability of the organization to fulfill its mission such as trends, recent changes internally or externally that might enhance or hinder the ability to proceed as planned. The organizational analysis may be made available, with permission, to students considering an internship at the site in the future.

### 3. Evaluation of the student's performance

The evaluation is a reflection for the student on the internship experience itself. The student may find it helpful to prepare this prior to meeting with the Supervisor for the final evaluation. Reviewing the ***Internship Agreement*** will be helpful in preparing this part of the assignment. The evaluation may be made available, with permission, to students considering an internship at the site in the future. Areas to be addressed include:

- a. How successful the student was in achieving the learning objectives and scope of work
- b. Key competencies and skills the student developed
- c. Any unexpected accomplishments
- d. Impact of the experience on the student's personal and professional development
- e. Resources and contacts the student developed for future use
- f. Recommendations to future students preparing for an internship: What would the student do differently? What was the student glad s/he did?