



## Region IV Public Health Training Center

A MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC HEALTH LEARNING NETWORK

# Pathways to Practice Scholars: Student Field Placement Guidebook

Region IV Public Health Training Center

### Region IV Sites

Alabama and Mississippi: University of Alabama at Birmingham

Florida: Florida A&M University

Georgia: Emory University (Central Office)

Kentucky: University of Louisville

North Carolina: University of North Carolina Wilmington

South Carolina: Medical University of South Carolina

Tennessee: East Tennessee State University

### Suggested Citation:

Region IV Public Health Training Center. (2019). Pathways to Practice Scholars: Student field placement guidebook. Retrieved from

<http://www.sph.emory.edu/r4phtc>

This project is supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) under grant number UB6HP31680, Public Health Training Centers for \$4,348,992. This information or content and conclusions are those of the author and should not be construed as the official position or policy of, nor should any endorsements be inferred by HRSA, HHS or the U.S. Government

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## The Region IV Public Health Training Center

Funded by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), the mission of the Region IV Public Health Training Center (R-IV PHTC) is to be a learning community that will build competence in the current and future public health workforce, expose public health students to the value of working in underserved areas, and advocate for public health systems and policies. With the Pathways to Practice Scholars field placement program, the R-IV PHTC seeks to place masters-level graduate public health students from accredited schools and programs of public health in meaningful field placement opportunities with public health agencies serving or working on behalf of underserved communities or populations. A limited number of awarded Scholars in North Carolina will be undergraduate public health students. Awarded student Scholars will be placed in organizations in the R-IV PHTC eight states, which are Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, Tennessee, and South Carolina.

The Central Office of the Region IV PHTC is housed at the Emory University Rollins School of Public Health (RSPH). Region IV sites also include: East Tennessee State University, Florida A&M University, Medical University of South Carolina, University of Alabama – Birmingham, University of Louisville, and the University of North Carolina – Wilmington.

### *Pathways to Practice Scholars (Field Placement Program):*

The Pathways to Practice Scholars Program is a student award program that will provide public health students with the opportunity to have competency-based field placement experiences in local health departments or community-based organizations (CBOs) serving underserved populations and communities. These activities provide an opportunity for current public health students to gain practical experience while being mentored by seasoned public health practitioners. Scholars will receive a \$3500 total award. Pathways to Practice field placements may take place during either the Summer or the Academic Year:

1. **Summer Field Placements:** Placements taking place during the summer (May-August), when students are generally not in class, may be located anywhere within the eight R-IV states. It is anticipated that field placements taking place in the summer will be 8-12 weeks in length and approximately 20-40 hours/week.\* Duration and hours per week will vary by field placement position and student degree requirements.
2. **Academic Year (Fall/Spring) Placements:** Those placements taking place during the academic year (September – April) are generally located in or near the area of the student's university enrollment. Academic year placements may range from 1-2 semesters. The total number of hours should range from 160-480 based around university requirements\* and the student's class schedule.

*\* Students may be limited in the minimum or maximum number of hours they can work per semester based on their university, school or degree's policies. If this work will be also be used as a practicum experience, the student should verify those requirements. Students should abide by their university policies.*

## Student Qualifications & Eligibility

- Candidates must be masters-level graduate public health students from accredited schools and programs of public health located in R-IV PHTC states: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, Tennessee, and South Carolina. A limited number of awarded Scholars in North Carolina will be undergraduate public health students.
- Additional qualifications and eligibility are included on each position description.

\*Since this program is funded through a federal grant, there is a citizenship requirement. Students must be U.S. citizens, non-citizen U.S. nationals, or a foreign national having in his/her possession a visa permitting permanent residence in the U.S.

## *Career Development*

In keeping with the mission of the R-IV PHTC, the desired and preferred outcome of the Pathways to Practice program is that the student will have a meaningful public health experience with exposure to the value of working in underserved areas, as well as incorporate public health core competencies for entry-level public health professionals as established by the Council on Linkages between Academia and Public Health Practices (<http://tinyurl.com/cdga9jn>).

## **Application Process**

### *Securing a Pathways to Practice Scholar Field Placement Position*

For field placements during the academic year, local positions may be promoted through specific universities. Summer field placement opportunities will be posted on the Region IV Public Health Training Center website in January. For more information and to view job postings visit: <http://www.sph.emory.edu/r4phtc>. Click on the Field Placement link to view current opportunities.

If applying for multiple jobs, students must submit a separate email application for each. Each application should include:

- Cover letter:
  - Specify for which agency/position you are applying.
  - Include a statement that indicates citizenship/visa status. (Candidates must be a U.S. citizen, non-citizen U.S. national, or a foreign national having in your possession a visa permitting permanent residence in the U.S.).
- Resume
- Other supporting documents requested in the specific job posting, for example:
  - Writing sample (3-5 pages)
  - Unofficial transcript
  - Reference list

R-IV PHTC staff and hiring field placement agencies will review applications and select students for interviews. Students will interview directly with the organizations.

### Application Process Steps

After you have submitted your application materials, the R-IV PHTC will contact you to inform you of your application status. If you are selected as one of the top candidates, the organization will contact you directly to set up an interview. Please note specific application/selection timeline for each cohort of scholars on the R-IV PHTC website.

Step 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scholar Field placements posted on <a href="http://www.sph.emory.edu/r4phtc">http://www.sph.emory.edu/r4phtc</a></li> <li>Students apply for position(s)</li> </ul>
Step 2	Applicants reviewed by R-IV PHTC and field placement organizations
Step 3	Agency interviews applicants and selects student Scholar
Step 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Awards are announced by R-IV PHTC Central Office</li> <li>Student Scholars have an Orientation webinar</li> <li>Award paperwork is completed</li> <li>Work plans are developed by student, agency, and R-IV PHTCs</li> </ul>
Step 5	Student begins field placement once award paperwork is processed

### Student Scholar Commitments and Deliverables

Once selected, Scholars will participate in a webinar orientation and a work plan meeting with the R-IV PHTC and mentor. Scholars will also be asked to join a private Pathways to Practice Scholars LinkedIn page to share resources. In addition to agency deliverables, students will be expected to develop the following items in conjunction with mentors:

- Competency-based Work Plan
- Field Placement Report\*
- Photos of Experience
- Abstract suitable for submission to a professional conference

Students participating in the Pathways to Practice Scholars Program are expected to complete a final project report about their experience. Please refer to the Deliverables Guidelines for specific instructions. Agency mentors will review the final project and deliverables. Students are encouraged to photograph their experience (within agency and HIPAA guidelines) for use in the final project.

\* If a student is using this field placement to complete a practicum or graduation requirement for their own institution, the student should contact Michelle Carvalho ([MLCARVA@emory.edu](mailto:MLCARVA@emory.edu)) at the R-IV PHTC to inquire if those deliverables can be used to meet the Student Scholar commitments.

In addition to the requirements of this program, student scholars will be expected to abide by all the policies and procedures of the institution where they are enrolled.

### *Working remotely*

The R-IV PHTC Pathways to Practice Scholars program is designed to give students a chance to hone their career skills in a real-world work environment through direct interaction with working professionals who serve as mentors. Therefore, students may not work from home and must spend a majority of their work hours in the office and/or with their mentor.

### *Award and Timekeeping*

Student Scholars are provided a total check award of \$3,500. Scholars are expected to work 20-40 hours per week during 8-12 weeks (200-400 hours total). Academic year placements may range from 1-2 semesters. Students will track time manually and may use a timesheet provided by the sponsoring agency. They should report the total field placement hours worked to the R-IV PHTC by the end of the program.

### *Student Scholar Rights and Responsibilities*

Each R-IV PHTC Pathways to Practice Student Scholar has the right to:

- a specific job description including the supervisor's expectations and standards.
- a clearly defined work schedule and the average number of hours of work to expect per week.
- adequate training to perform assigned tasks.
- a safe and sanitary working environment.
- regular supervision and review of work performed.
- a clear explanation of the procedure for receiving the award.
- instructions on how to report an unexpected absence from a scheduled work shift.
- a procedure for stating concerns related to the job or supervisor.
- adequate training in relevant organization policies and procedures, including HIPAA policies.
- tools to adequately perform assigned tasks.

Each R-IV PHTC Student Scholar is responsible for:

- becoming familiar with information regarding the terms of the program and with general policies.
- understanding the specific job responsibilities including the supervisor's expectations.
- performing assigned tasks in an efficient and timely manner.
- arranging a mutually agreeable work schedule with the supervisor, and work the assigned hours regularly.
- notifying the supervisor immediately if a scheduled work period must be missed.
- accurately documenting work hours.
- completing a work plan together with the organization and the R-IV PHTC.
- joining the Pathways to Practice Scholar LinkedIn page.
- completing a pre-, mid-, post-project and 1 year follow-up evaluation.
- completing all agency deliverables and R-IV PHTC required materials.

### Field Placement Agency Rights and Responsibilities

Each R-IV PHTC Pathways to Practice Field Placement Agency has the right to:

- have assigned tasks completed efficiently and correctly by the student employee.
- have student employees record their time properly.
- expect student workers to adhere within reason to a regular work schedule.
- be notified immediately if a student must miss a scheduled work shift.

Each R-IV PHTC Pathways to Practice Field Placement Agency has the responsibility for:

- reviewing, interviewing, and selecting students.
- providing adequate orientation and on-the-job training to student employees. R-IV PHTC relies on the supervisor to communicate all policies and procedures, including HIPAA policies, to the student.
- clarifying the required hours of work and expected duration of job to students.
- setting expectations for the quality and quantity of work.
- notifying the R-IV PHTC of any issues with the student that may result in termination of the field placement.
- ensuring students do not begin working prior to receiving HR approval or continue working past the point of termination.
- discussing and documenting any performance issues with student employees and sharing, as appropriate, with R-IV PHTC staff.
- completing a work plan together with the organization and R-IV PHTC.
- completing a mid-, and post-project evaluation.
- maintaining open communication with R-IV PHTC staff and student.

### *Work Plan*

Together with the organization and R-IV PHTC, all students will complete a work plan within the first weeks of the field placement. These work plans will be used to outline the activities and responsibilities associated with the field placement.

### *Evaluation*

All student participants in the Pathways to Practice Program will complete a pre-and post-experience survey as well as a mid-point, final and 1 year follow-up evaluation. These evaluations will assess how the field placement is going and progress on the work plan, as well as address any questions the students and organizations may have.

### *Grievances*

Both students and agencies have the right to a professional work environment and a mutually-beneficial experience. The first step to solving problems is to have a courteous, professional conversation between the aggrieved parties. Each side should then take steps to address the issue. If the problem is not resolved, the employer or student should contact Michelle Carvalho ([MLCARVA@emory.edu](mailto:MLCARVA@emory.edu)) at the R-IV PHTC.

### *Organization-Initiated Terminations*

Failure to meet the student responsibilities as outlined above may be grounds for termination. Should an agency think that there may be grounds for termination, they should report the circumstances to the R-IV PHTC immediately and together, the agency, your home institution, and the R-IV PHTC will make a decision regarding if and when the student should be terminated. In the event that the student is terminated, an evaluation should be completed at the time of termination and the student will receive a partial award appropriate for time worked. The R-IV PHTC is not obligated to find alternative arrangements for the student, and organization-initiated termination may be grounds for the student's exclusion from further participation in the program.

### *Student-Initiated Terminations*

Students should take reasonable measures to resolve differences with the organization. A student planning to resign a Pathways to Practice position should first notify the R-IV PHTC. As a professional courtesy, the organization should be given two weeks' notice. The R-IV PHTC is in no way obligated to find alternative arrangements for the student. The student will receive a partial award appropriate for time worked.

### *Personal Safety*

Students should take reasonable steps to protect their personal property and the property of the organization. Valuables should be kept in a secure location and should not be displayed.

Students may not drive (in their vehicles or any other vehicle) clients, family members of clients or anyone other than host organization employees or volunteers.

Students may not be alone with clients and/or family members of clients outside of a healthcare or public setting. Students may not visit the homes of clients and/or family members of clients without being accompanied by an employee or volunteer of the host organization.

### *Professional Work Ethics*

Pathways to Practice Scholars work in professional environments, and should act accordingly. This program not only provides an opportunity to hone skills in public health, but also to enhance professionalism as well. Students are representatives of their home universities and the R- IV PHTC sites. Therefore, professional conduct is expected at all times and in all circumstances while in a field placement. The following is a list of guidelines for professional standards.

1. **Dress professionally.** Your attire should be business professional. Once you have secured the position, have a discussion with your supervisor about appropriate work attire. Even if the attire is casual, make sure you look neatly arranged. No ripped jeans, revealing or tight clothing, tank tops, etc. should ever be worn to any job assignment.
2. **Separate personal and professional life.** Do not check your personal e-mail, receive or make personal phone calls, or visit online networking sites during work hours. Employers do notice, and it does reflect poorly on you and the R- IV PHTC.
3. **Be punctual.** Arrive to work at the time arranged between you and your mentor. If you will be late for any reason, call your mentor.
4. **Inform your mentor of any absences as soon as possible.** If you must be absent (e.g., doctor's appointment, exam, etc.), give as much notice as possible. This allows your mentor to plan for your absence and ensure that any responsibilities and duties will be covered.
5. **Be respectful in managing all tasks.** Many jobs will require you to perform administrative tasks such as filing, typing memos, or making copies. This will happen in almost any job, at almost any level. All work activities are important to the productivity and goals of the organization and no one is above completing certain tasks. *Note: Although you may be required to do some administrative tasks, the purpose of the opportunity is to further your knowledge and experience in public health. If administrative tasks are the majority of your time and you do not feel like you are gaining public health experience, have a conversation with your mentor. For tips on how to start this conversation, contact the R- IV PHTC.*
6. **Honor your commitment.** By accepting your internship position, you are committing to work for the full span of the program. *Note: If your mentor is not fulfilling his/ her responsibilities, or if the work environment is not safe, it may be appropriate to discuss the situation with your mentor. If the situation does not improve after a courteous, professional conversation, contact the R- IV PHTC to discuss a way forward.*
7. **Be honest.** Relationships are based on trust and honesty. Usually, an open discussion can lead to an amicable agreement.
8. **Accept responsibility.** If you make a mistake, own it and learn from it. No one likes the person in the office who never accepts responsibility for their mistakes.
9. **Receive feedback in a professional manner.** If a supervisor or coworker gives constructive criticism or corrects you, accept the feedback as a learning opportunity.

10. **Uphold confidentiality.** Confidential information should not be disclosed. Patient records or personal information should only be discussed if it is work-related. Ask your mentor about the organization's HIPAA policies and abide by these policies. Any information shared in confidence should not be discussed with outside parties (including other coworkers).
11. **Communicate professionally.** All written and verbal communication should be professional and courteous.
  - E-mail is forever. E-mails can be stored on the organization server for years. They can also be forwarded without your permission, knowledge, or control. Do not put confidential, inflammatory, or embarrassing information in an e-mail.
  - Spell out all words. Do not use "text language" or emoticons (smiley faces).
  - Tone is not always clear in an e-mail. Use language that is friendly and respectful.
  - If you are angry, take time to calm down before responding either via e-mail or in person. Do not say or write something you will regret later.
  - Organize your thoughts before you speak. Know what you want to say before you start the conversation.
  - Proofread everything before you send. Spell check does not catch words that are spelled correctly but used incorrectly (e.g., there, their, and they're).

Violating professional guidelines can result in termination of field placement and violating students may be banned from further participation in the program.

**We hope that the Pathways to Practice Scholars Field Placement Program will be mutually beneficial for the Student Scholars, mentors, and field placement agencies. Please continue to communicate with the R-IV PHTC for additional resources and future updates.**

## Contact Information

For additional information, please visit <http://www.sph.emory.edu/r4phtc>.

### Main contact:

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