

## **RESEARCH & EVALUATION** ***(ASSESSMENT, RESEARCH AND PROGRAM EVALUATION)***

### ***About The Research and Evaluation Team***

The Research and Evaluation Team (RE) of the Health District functions behind the scenes to assure that program managers, program directors, the Board, and members of the community have sound information for decision-making. RE-Team members are charged with locating, organizing, analyzing, synthesizing and reporting on relevant health data and evaluating programs and projects in an objective manner.

Activities of The RE Team can be grouped into several general responsibilities:

- **Program Evaluation** – The RE Team develops evaluation plans and methods for new Health District programs and services. Once established, RE staff provide oversight for all program evaluations, each focusing on program monitoring or process measures, outcomes measures tied to program hypotheses, and measures of client, patient or constituent satisfaction. Most programs are also evaluated for “value-added” by benchmarking with other comparable programs, and reviewing the published literature for evidence of cost effectiveness. Results of needs assessments and evaluations are summarized and reported to decision-makers.
  
- **Community Health Needs Assessments** - In 1995, the Health District adopted a comprehensive triennial assessment plan that included the collection of original local data on community health needs. The Triennial review, led by the RE Team, has been conducted in 1995, 1998, 2001, and 2004. This process will be repeated again in 2007. The cornerstone of this process is the collection of local data via a comprehensive population health survey and a series of discussion groups among key informants and community members.
  
- **Research and Technical Assistance** –Team members conduct research, literature reviews and data interpretation on specific health related topics. Subjects we have delved into in the past several years include the impact of the new Medicare Prescription Drug Plans, impact of an aging population on health care services, potential state-wide solutions for improving health care access, community water fluoridation, integrating mental health care services in primary care settings, emergency planning and pandemic influenza planning, and efforts to address overweight and obesity.

### ***Internship Opportunities***

Generally, someone seeking a Research and Evaluation intern placement should be engaged in a master’s level program in public health, environmental health, community health, social work, sociology, or other social science fields.

Intern assignments will vary depending on the RE-Team’s current project workload and the status & demands of particular evaluation, research, needs assessments, literature reviews, or reports. Typically, interns assist in researching, establishing, and maintaining evaluation and/or research activities for specific programs or projects. Interns are often asked to:

- Conduct thorough literature reviews on health related topics (both library and Internet based research)
- Help design instruments, tools, databases and other systems for collecting and organizing data
- Utilize evaluation tools and methods to collect data
- Assist with data organization, interpretation, and reporting on findings
- Work as a team member, participating in group meetings, retreats, and special events as necessary.

Other placements include preventive medicine resident practicum rotations through an agreement with the University of Colorado Health Science Center. Residents are supervised by Bruce Cooper, MD, MSPH, Medical Director of the Health District.

### ***Supervision***

Masters level interns are directly supervised by the Coordinator of the RE Team. The intern and the Coordinator work together to develop an internship agreement/job performance plan and meet frequently both individually and as a team to discuss the internship. The intern is also encouraged to interact with other members of the RE Team (the Evaluation Specialist and Evaluation Assistant) as appropriate given the particular internship objectives. Given the RE Team's role of supporting other Health District projects and programs the intern may work closely with other program staff and collaborating community groups. The Health District's Medical Director supervises Medical Residents.

### ***What the RE-Team Looks for in an Intern***

First and foremost, an intern must have a demonstrated interest in and appreciation for applied health, human services and/or social science research and evaluation. We feel we provide an excellent setting for real world application of newly or concurrently acquired academic research and evaluation methods in a varied and diverse community-health setting. Although we are prepared to teach an intern new and practical ways to successfully provide evaluation and research services within an organization – we do expect our interns to come with a basic set of background skills and knowledge. The following are some of the desired attributes that are intended to assure a mutually beneficial working relationship between the intern and the RE-Team:

- 1) A Masters Degree (in progress or completed) in a relevant field such as public health, environmental health, social work, sociology, psychology or similar.
- 2) Education and/or experience in applied human research methods such as survey research methods, collecting and analyzing data, locating and summarizing information from information sources, conducting computerized library literature searches.
- 3) Education and/or experience in program evaluation methods including familiarity with designing and/or implementation of evaluations of health or social services programs and efforts using qualitative, quantitative and mixed-methodologies.
- 4) Education or experience in basic quantitative statistical methods. Beginner to intermediate skills in a statistical software package (such as SPSS or STATA) is desired.
- 5) Competency in computer skills including spreadsheet/databases (Excel, Access), word processing, email, and Internet.