

# HOW TO START THE PROCESS: FINDING YOUR PRACTICUM SITE

The practicum search process is synonymous to a job search. But for a student, the search is less intensive since many organizations and agencies are very receptive to receiving students and are eager to offer mentorship in exchange for your service in aiding them with solving or addressing real-world public health challenges. Focus your approach by proactively looking for opportunities that mirror what you plan to do with your MPH in the future OR by contacting agencies/organizations that meet your employment interests.

**HOW TO SEARCH FOR A PRACTICUM:** You are not limited! Public Health is practiced all over the world and in various sectors. Given this, you **will** find an opportunity and it will be meaningful and a launchpad for your next steps in public health. Finding a practicum should mimic a job search. Search through job boards and public health agencies to identify opportunities that meet your interests and future goals. To get you started, take a look at any of the following websites:

1. LinkedIn (make sure this is updated and professional)
2. Indeed
3. Stempel College weekly newsletter (entitled: *This week at FIU Stempel College*)
4. [American Public Health Association](#)
5. [Public Health Institute](#)

When using job search engines like LinkedIn or Indeed, try searches such as the following:

- Public health intern
- Public health internship
- Health internship

Even search for jobs like “epidemiologist”, “community health specialist”, “health analyst” or even your dream position. Searching for actual jobs is a powerful approach for the following reasons:

- It will help you identify agencies that you might not have known about that are looking for public health experts
- It will help you learn about the skill sets required for the position (which you should try to showcase in your resume if you have them OR work on obtaining through your practicum experience)
- It generally displays the contact person for the position, who should then be the person you connect with to express your interest in a practicum placement

**HOW TO APPROACH A SITE:** This is your time to make a great first impression. If this is a site that does not have an advertised internship, feel free to send them a message such as the following:

Good afternoon Mx/Dr. [Insert Name],

My name is [Insert Name] and I am a current Master of Public Health (MPH) student at Florida International University who is very interested in your organization. As part of my program's requirements, I am expected to complete a 200-hour internship. Do you have any internships available or individuals who are willing to accept students? Attached you will find my resume but if you would like any additional information from me, please let me know. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

[Insert Name]

**WHEN TO START SEARCHING:** It is never too early to start the process since securing a site can take time. It would be wise to start your search no later than two (2) semesters from your intended practicum enrollment (i.e. if you plan to enroll in the practicum in Spring 2024, you should be starting your search Summer 2023). If you have questions along the way, please feel free to contact me – I'm here to help!

## FAQs

### *Am I automatically placed at a practicum site?*

- The practicum is your time to gain exposure to the practice of public health through new experiences and professional development opportunities. The choice of a practicum site is a very personal decision since selection should be based on your career goals and interests. We want you to have not only a quality experience but an enjoyable one as well. Self-led selections ensure a meaningful experience.

### *What happens if I can't identify a site?*

- The practicum search takes time. In preparation for your search, be sure to have a clear plan. The practicum search is the same as a job search. Given this, make sure your plan includes the following:
  - Searching for internship opportunities in public health
  - Reviewing job search engines such as Indeed and LinkedIn
  - Refining your search (i.e. if you're interested in health promotion, enhancing your search to include "health education", "health & wellness", "health equity" and "community health" could yield better or more results).
  - Broadening your search (i.e. if you're interested in epidemiology, expanding your search to include "infectious disease prevention", "public health analyst", "public health intern" or even "biostatistics" might yield great options that you might have missed out on.
- **Contact me!** I'm here to help and offer support. You can contact me directly at [dokeke@fiu.edu](mailto:dokeke@fiu.edu).