

My PHPS Experience in Houston: By: Shahid M. Hafidh, MPH

As a CDC Public Health Prevention Service (PHPS) fellow, I began a two year field assignment in October 2010 with Harris County Public Health and Environmental Services (HCPHES), in Houston TX, seeking to gain as many public health leadership and project management skills and experiences as possible.

Since arriving in Harris County, the 3rd largest county in the United States, I have been involved in many projects, ranging from conducting a community health assessment, to coordinating the development of a community-based Produce Buyer's Club aimed at addressing challenges with access to healthy food. I have also designed a process evaluation plan and coordinated assessment activities for a \$2 million Childhood Obesity Prevention Planning Initiative. Those activities have included conducting the initial assessment of the walkability and bikeability of Harris County neighborhoods identified as crash hot spots for accidents between automobiles and pedestrians and cyclists. It has been exciting working on a cutting-edge public health strategy designed to promote safer built environments that will encourage people to be more active with a goal of impacting the climbing obesity rates.



My experience as a fellow has been both rewarding and challenging. Fortunately, I have a dynamic set of supervisors (both PHPS and field supervisors) who are also great mentors. They worked diligently with me to identify the numerous opportunities available within my revised scope of work. Flexibility and open-mindedness have been extremely important.

I appreciate the opportunity to try new experiences as a fellow, at the local health department/community level. I also witnessed firsthand how vital the work of Animal Control staff is in protecting the public from vector-borne disease, by shadowing an HCPHES Veterinary Public Health Animal Control Officer to catch loose animals (usually dogs and cats). That was a very memorable experience! My experience as a PHPS fellow has been exciting and enjoyable, and I highly recommend PHPS to others interested in obtaining varied public health experiences and gaining a broad set of skills