

# Public Health Practice



## Stories from the Field

The University of Texas School of Public Health  
*Student Practicum Experiences*  
Spring 2014 – Health Promotion & Behavioral Sciences

Prevention diabetes safe kids clean water policy disaster response  
cancer adolescent sexual health HIV/AIDS research obesity  
alcohol empowerment vaccinations maternal & child health

The practicum experience is an integral part of the MPH and DrPH curricula. Public health students are provided with the opportunity to apply their classroom knowledge to real world settings through which they make a meaningful contribution to a public health organization.

Under the guidance of a community preceptor and faculty sponsor, students from all divisions gain a deeper understanding of public health practice, interact with professionals in the field, and expand their repertoire of professional skills.

This thirteenth-edition e-magazine showcases student practicum experiences throughout the Spring 2014 semester. (Prior semesters may be accessed through the e-book, a collection of student abstracts and e-magazines describing their experiences.)



# Practicum Topics

Serving Size: 1 Practicum per Student

Servings per e-Magazine: 3

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|                            |                  |
|----------------------------|------------------|
| Hours per Week per Student | Approximately 12 |
| Campuses (Houston)         | 1                |
| Division                   | 1                |

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Student

## Health Promotion & Behavioral Sciences

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|----------------------------------|-------------------|
| Dental Health for the Community  | Parnaz Adibian    |
| Prenatal Education – Star Babies | Katherine English |
| Childhood Obesity                | Susan Manuel      |

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# Dental Health for the Community

## Practicum Highlights

- Having the opportunity to witness patients take your hand and express deep gratitude for the free dental care they are receiving.
- As an incoming dental student, it was amazing working with dentists that I admire from around Houston and to work with an organization that I hope to be an official member of as a dentist.

## Advice for Future Practicum Students

- Take advantage of the practicum by choosing a location that you are passionate about because it is a great inside look of what is to come.

*“Don’t follow your Dreams;  
Chase them.”*

--Richard Dumb



Pre-dental volunteers at TMOM Houston -Photo courtesy of Parnaz Adibian

## Dental Health Promotion and Intervention for Houstonians

By: Parnaz Adibian

I had the privilege of working with the Great Houston Dental Society these past few months. The main public health issue that we worked on was dental health promotion and intervention by way of free dental care events. Dental members would gather for numerous meetings in order to plan, fund, and initiate dental events.

### Public Health Significance

Of the standard ten Public Health Essential Services (PHES), I felt GHDS covered: Inform, educate, and empower, Link, Research.

The goal with the events GHDS offers is to help educate the community on services at their disposal and how to better their oral hygiene. Different organizations provide resources to help the cause. Also, GHDS helps dentists, hygienists, dental assistants and office administration with CE courses. These courses not only educate practitioners but also provide insight to GHDS for future plans and ideas.

I helped with the Texas Mission of Mercy (funding, efficiency, Lead for Pre-dental Students), Give Kids a Smile Day (called pediatric dentists, efficiency), and the Star of the South (researched judging techniques for dental table clinics). My final product is a survey that may be given to participants of their dental promotion programs. Also, any research and sources I provided them upon their request.

My internship at GHDS helped me experience these three PHES. I was able to educate local Houstonians and children about oral care. I witnessed various groups and backgrounds collaborating for a cause and how to run such a meeting. I also was asked to research into other programs and what local events GHDS could help with.

Poor oral hygiene still has a high incidence rate in Houston. More interventions need to be targeted towards prevention in order to decrease future health costs.

# Prenatal Education – Star Babies

## Practicum Highlights

- Helping with classes for pregnant women on topics including childbirth, breastfeeding, infant care, and carseat safety
- Compiling data to evaluate participant satisfaction



Helping Mothers and Families

Image source:  
<http://www.texaschildrenshealthplan.org/starbabies>

## Advice for Future Practicum Students

- Choose a practicum experience that is relevant to your personal interests. You're going to be spending a lot of time working on your practicum, so you want it to be something you'll enjoy. This particular practicum opportunity stood out to me since my son was a few months old when I was searching for a practicum. I liked the idea of working with and helping pregnant women and other new mothers.

## Providing resources for new mothers

By: Katherine English

My practicum was with the Star Babies program, which is part of Texas Children's Health Plan. This organization provides education and other resources to pregnant women and new mothers.

Members of the program can attend classes on topics such as childbirth, breastfeeding, infant care and safe sleep, carseat safety, and infant CPR. I was able to help with these classes, as

well as assisting with follow-up contact with participants to assess their satisfaction with the program. I also helped at community baby shower events that provided education, resources, and helpful gifts to members of the program.

The final product I created for my practicum site was a set of two curricula to be used in additional prenatal education classes on topics relevant for high-risk pregnancies.

## Public Health Significance

My practicum experience relates closely to the Essential Service "inform, educate, and empower people about health issues." The host organization does this by providing important prenatal education to an underserved population. I was happy with the experience I gained as I was able to see this service in action, as well as assisting with its delivery as I helped with the classes.

Another relevant Essential Service provided by the organization is "link

people to needed personal health services." The organization assists women who are not receiving prenatal or postpartum care in finding a doctor who will meet their needs and provide them with the care they require at this important time.

I was also able to observe the Essential Service "evaluate effectiveness, accessibility, and quality of health services" as I assisted with compiling data from participant surveys and follow-up regarding their satisfaction with the classes and the program.

# CHILDHOOD OBESITY

## WEIGHT ASSESSMENT IN LIVINGSTON INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

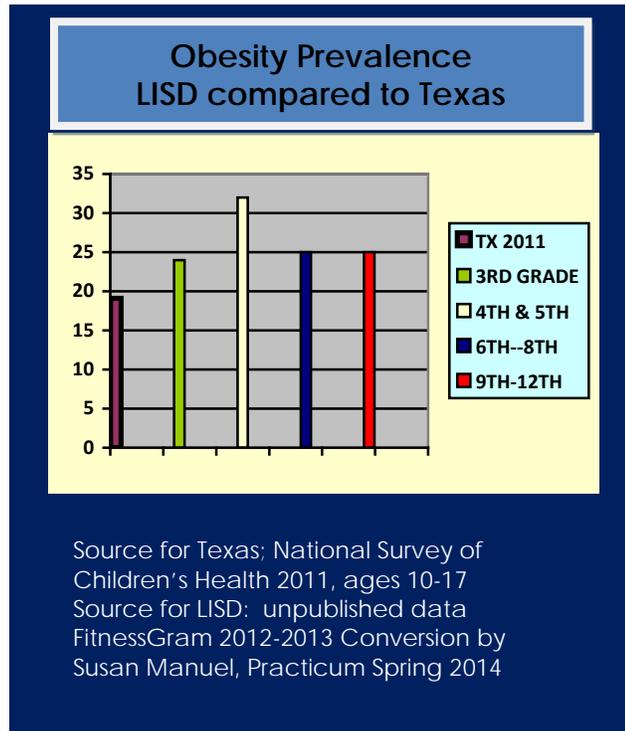
By: SUSAN MANUEL

I worked with the FitnessGram data that was collected by the Livingston Independent School District during the 2012-2013 school year.

I used the CDC BMI Tool for Schools available at [cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov) and plugged in the FitnessGram data to calculate the obesity prevalence for 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade, 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> Grade, 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> Grade and High School Grades 9-12 in LISD.

I calculated the data for the school district and shared it with the Angelina County and Cities Health District who has been involved in some childhood obesity programs for our region.

My duties included data analysis, presentation of that data and helping with planning and presenting booths for the Health & Wellness Fair.



## PRACTICUM HIGHLIGHTS

- ..Converted 2012-2013 FitnessGram data to CDC BMI data
- ..Presentation of data to School Health Advisory Council on 4/8/2014
- ..LIV-Healthy -Health & Wellness Fair

## LESSONS LEARNED

- ..Building relationships in the community are key to ever having a public health impact in that community.

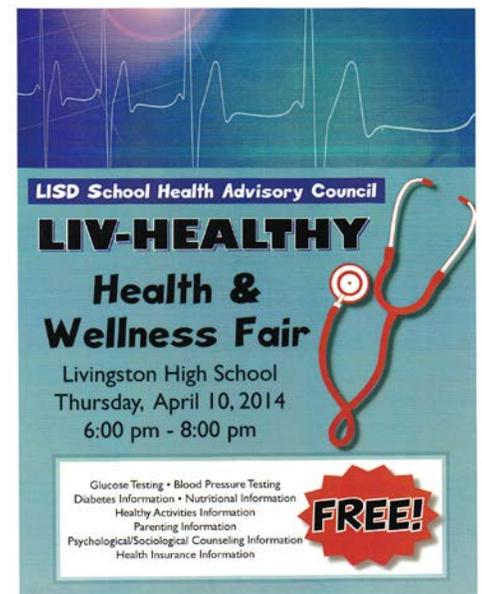
## Public Health Significance

### Diagnose and Investigate Health Problems

This practicum experience afforded the opportunity to quantify the prevalence of overweight and obesity in children of the community. For both the school district and the health district the presence of the health problem of childhood obesity is clearly defined.

### Inform, Educate and Empower People

This practicum experience allowed the members of the LISD School Health Advisory Council to be informed and educated about the problem of childhood obesity in their school district. My hope is that becoming aware of the problem will help the community take ownership, motivating them to change.



Source: Public Flyer distributed by LISD advertising Health & Wellness Fair

For more information regarding  
The University of Texas School of Public Health,  
Office of Public Health Practice  
and the practicum program, please visit:

<https://sph.uth.tmc.edu/practicum/>