

OHSU-PSU School of Public Health



SCHOOL OF
PUBLIC HEALTH

Public Health Practice Team

In this unique partnership, the Public Health Practice Team (PHPT) of the OHSU-PSU School of Public Health partners with the Oregon Health Authority and other community partners to respond to existing and emergent public health needs as well as preparing for potential public health challenges. We collaborate on Public Health Practice to help advance Oregon toward a healthier and more equitable future.

Learn more about our program:



Bridging academic and applied public health

- History of our partnership, including our commitment to advancing health equity.



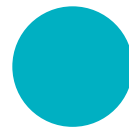
Students' experiences and professional development

- Applied, field-based learning.
- Jobs pipeline for SPH students.



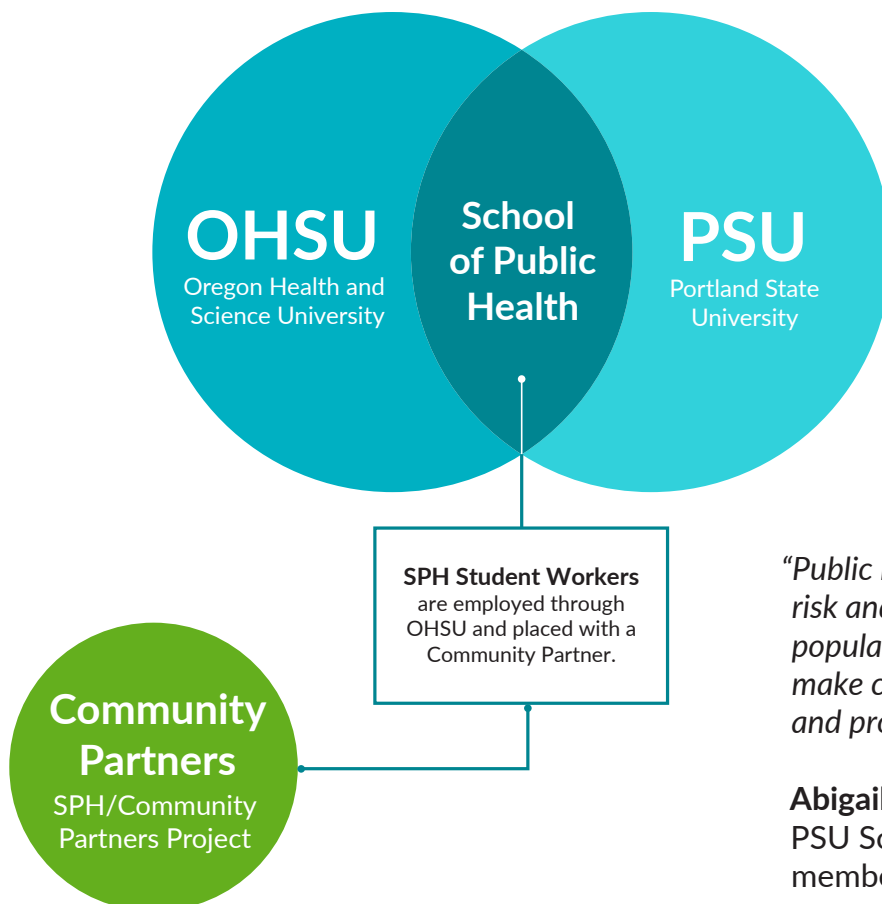
Benefits to Community Partners

- Enhanced workforce capacity with fresh talent dedicated to PH.
- Unique university/government collaborations.



Looking toward the future of Public Health in Oregon

- Workforce development through community engagement.
- Training the next generation of public health workers for our state.



“Public health practice is not just understanding risk and protective factors for the health of a population level, but asking how we actually make change. How do we implement policies and programs that help improve health?”

Abigail Newby-Kew, Graduate of the OHSU-PSU School of Public Health and former member of the OHA COVID-19 Team

Public Health Practice

Public health practice is the cornerstone of the field: **it is about taking action to protect the public's health.** The COVID-19 pandemic as well as the recent challenges presented by Mpox and RSV all highlight the need to have a robust public health practice infrastructure in place as well as the need for a strong and experienced public health workforce.

Public health focuses on health at the population level, and practice is where the large conceptual framework intersects with serving individuals in a meaningful, equitable manner. Practice is arguably the most direct interaction that most public health workers will have with the public.

Wherever someone's public health career takes them, a solid foundation in public health practice prepares them to better understand how their work is implemented on the ground and among communities.

"Practice is the bedrock of public health, and our School's Public Health Practice Team provides our students with applied, real-world experience in the field. It's an innovative program that leverages community partnerships to collaboratively respond to public health challenges facing Oregon in real time."

Richard Johnson, Interim Dean of the OHSU-PSU School of Public Health

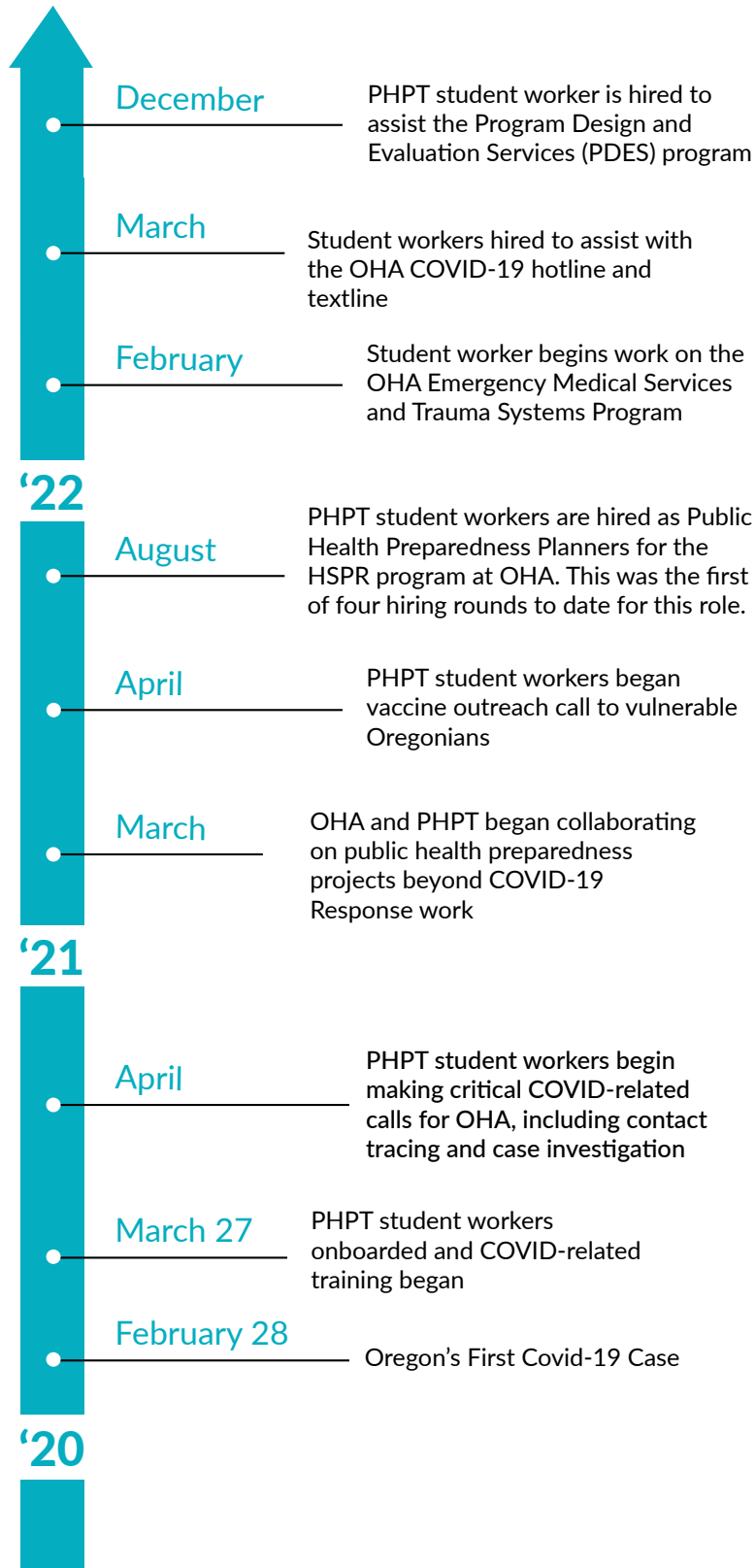


"I began working in Public Health Practice as an epidemiology graduate student doing HIV surveillance, and the experience helped set the trajectory of my career. It's an honor to come full circle and now lead this project connecting our graduate students with practice opportunities and promoting their growth as public health professionals."

Jonathan Snowden, Associate Professor, OHSU-PSU SPH.
Principal Investigator, PHPT



SPH and Oregon Health Authority History of Our Partnership



SPH and Oregon Health Authority

History of Our Partnership

Project Beginnings and Progress

In March of 2020, the SPH Public Health Practice Team began working with the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) to support their statewide public health response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Oregon. We helped address the critical need for surge capacity by hiring SPH graduate students on an expedited timeline and deploying them to work on COVID-19 response.

Their strong public health training and diverse backgrounds prepared our graduate students to be rapidly trained by OHA to help meet the needs of Oregonians. We have since expanded our partnership with OHA to include additional practice projects (some related to COVID-19, others not). Since March 2022, we've trained and placed **over 50** SPH student workers into these projects, addressing several pressing public health issues.

Public Health Practice Teams Stats

- **50+:** Number of student-workers hired and placed at OHA to date.
- **6 months:** Minimum time commitment for an SPH project when working with a community partner.
- **20 to 24:** Hours per week a student worker generally works.
- **100%:** Students who have been trained in principles of health equity.
- **10:** Types of roles students have been placed into.



SPH and Oregon Health Authority

Health Equity in Practice

- *Health equity* is a state in which all people have the full opportunity and resources to achieve their optimal health potential and no one is disadvantaged because of social circumstances.
- Progress toward health equity requires redressing current and historical inequities by confronting racism, colonialism, classism, misogyny, ableism, transphobia, and how they intersect.
- Health equity is at the core of all that we do, in the public health field and in our teams.
- SPH and OHA share a commitment to health equity, and we have operationalized this commitment with our *Health Equity Guiding Principles*.
- We train all staff and students in this approach, providing a framework and concrete actions to realize our commitment.
- Only through *consistent* and *sustained engagement* can we ensure that our work helps undo historical inequity in our society and our field, pointing the way forward to an equitable future.

"We started hosting School of Public Health graduate students during the most challenging times of the COVID and hospital surge responses, and they helped get us through the surge of work – juggling information, contractors, meetings, and shifting needs. As we try to come out of the COVID response, the students continue to be a key part of our team. We have so much rebuilding work to do with our programs and the students bring different experiences and fresh perspectives."

Eric Gebbie, Director of Emergency Operations for HSPR (Health Security, Preparedness and Response program at OHA)



SPH and Oregon Health Authority

Roles/Jobs Students Have Fulfilled to Date:

- COVID-19 Contact Tracer
- COVID-19 Case Investigator
- Vaccine Navigator
- Public Health Preparedness Planner
- Medical Chart Abstractor
- Health Equity Data Specialist
- Public Health Program Design Staffer
- Emergency Medicine & Trauma Epidemiology Specialist
- Mixed Methods Research Analyst

Full-Time Jobs Our Graduates Have Been Hired Into:

- Travel Epidemiologist, Oregon Health Authority
- Public Health Analyst, Alaska Public Health Division
- Postdoctoral Fellow (vaccine safety), Kaiser Permanente Southern California Department of Research & Evaluation

Students Who Excel in These Roles Are:

- “” Able to communicate clearly and effectively.
- () Open to feedback, mentorship, and professional development opportunities.
- [] Familiar with or able to quickly learn professional etiquette and expectations.
- ! Enthusiastic to explore roles within the field of public health.
- + Interested in work that directly contributes to better health for Oregonians, and who will find this contribution meaningful.
- ... Open to learning new tasks and skills on an ongoing basis.
- ? Comfortable navigating complexity, ambiguity, and rapidly-changing roles.
- Capable of staying grounded when doing emotionally-challenging work, (e.g., disaster planning, phone conversations with distraught people).
- @ Committed to serving as a representative of the OHSU-PSU School of Public Health: always demonstrating a high level of integrity, work ethic, and professionalism.
- = Dedicated to health equity and interested in incorporating health equity principles into the work they do.



Student Voices

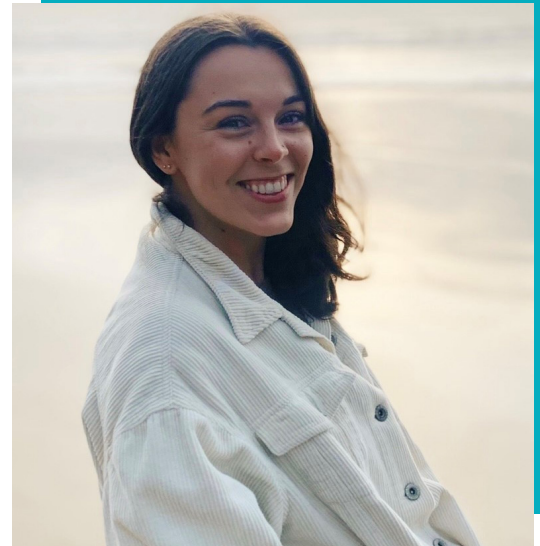


“My experience at OHA gives me an advantage and helps me stand out compared to other epidemiologists. It shows that I was proactive and engaged during the pandemic and have the skill set and tools to assist with similar tasks down the road.”

Shabir Sarwary, Epidemiology PhD student. One of the original members of the COVID-19 Team. Also worked as an Emergency Medicine & Trauma Epidemiology Specialist.

“Working for HSPR has given me the opportunity to gain firsthand experience preparing for and responding to public health emergencies while pursuing my MPH. I have been able to apply my classroom knowledge in a meaningful way to help reduce the burden of COVID-19, Mpox, wildfires, and other events on our community. I have made great connections at OHA and know that this experience will help jumpstart my public health career.”

Abby Malloy, Health Promotion MPH student and Public Health Preparedness Planner on OHA’s HSPR Team



“I appreciated the professional, cohesive and collaborative culture of our team... Everything was moving so fast [due to COVID-19]. We had to adapt to rapidly and constantly changing public health needs because we were working to respond to a pandemic that continued to evolve and change fast. This experience definitely further solidified my enthusiasm and passion for public health and my profession of epidemiology.”

Jen Ku, Epidemiology PhD alum and former Student Lead of the COVID-19 Team



Student Voices

Taurica Salmon



What was the **most helpful/beneficial aspect** of your being placed with OHA?

My time with the OHA as a graduate student gave me hands-on experience in understanding how things intersected on the local and state level to navigate the pandemic. This was the first time I had the opportunity to be engaged in this type of work. This also taught me how to navigate various systems within the OHA as a case investigator and a vaccine navigator.

Did anything **surprise you** about your OHA experience?

The biggest realization I had was how quickly the public health response evolved and shifted when different needs were identified. When I first started, the needs were focused on contact tracing and case investigations. By the end of my time there, the need has shifted to vaccine navigation by focusing on reaching folks served by Aging and People with Disabilities. This work focused on identifying locations for folks to receive vaccine appointments, requesting in-home vaccines, assisting with transportation services, and identifying barriers for accessing the vaccine.

Did your experience with OHA **change or inform** your thoughts about your Public Health career interests or trajectory?

It affirmed that I wanted to be involved in this important work as the current pandemic is one of the longest and hardest public health crises that we have had to endure. Because of my interests and experiences in the Pandemic Response Team, this led me to pursue a position as a Travel Epidemiologist at the OHA. Alongside my co-workers, we continue to be at the forefront of the pandemic response, and I am grateful for the knowledge and experience my previous position with the OHA brought.

Student Voices

Taurica Salmon

Which of **your experiences** doing this work have most stood out to you, in terms of the personal meaning they've brought, their professional value, or the growth that they've enabled?

Some of the most valuable memories that I have were in our team meetings of which time was set aside to talk about topics such as anti-racism. Aside from that, I felt connected to the Spanish-speaking population when I was working as a case investigator and vaccine navigator. There were many instances of which I was able to answer questions regarding resources, health education and vaccine hesitancy.

Considering that **health equity is central** to public health, but we are pulled in many different directions in doing public health practice work, how can we best continue to center equity in all that we do?

To focus on health equity, we must continue to research, examine, and invest in learning about health inequities to recognize who is being disproportionately impacted and center those populations in all levels of public health. Whether we are focusing on the COVID-19 pandemic, food insecurity or any other major areas. It is also important that we make resources available to folks who are engaged in public health such as incorporating representation from multicultural communities, native speakers of other languages, cultural competency trainings and anti-racism curriculum. In terms of our health equity journey, public health is at various levels of understanding health equity, therefore, it's important to continue promoting health equity work even when those conversations and trainings can be difficult.

How did our **equity emphasis** inform your professional growth and/or your ability to advance health equity in your work since graduation?

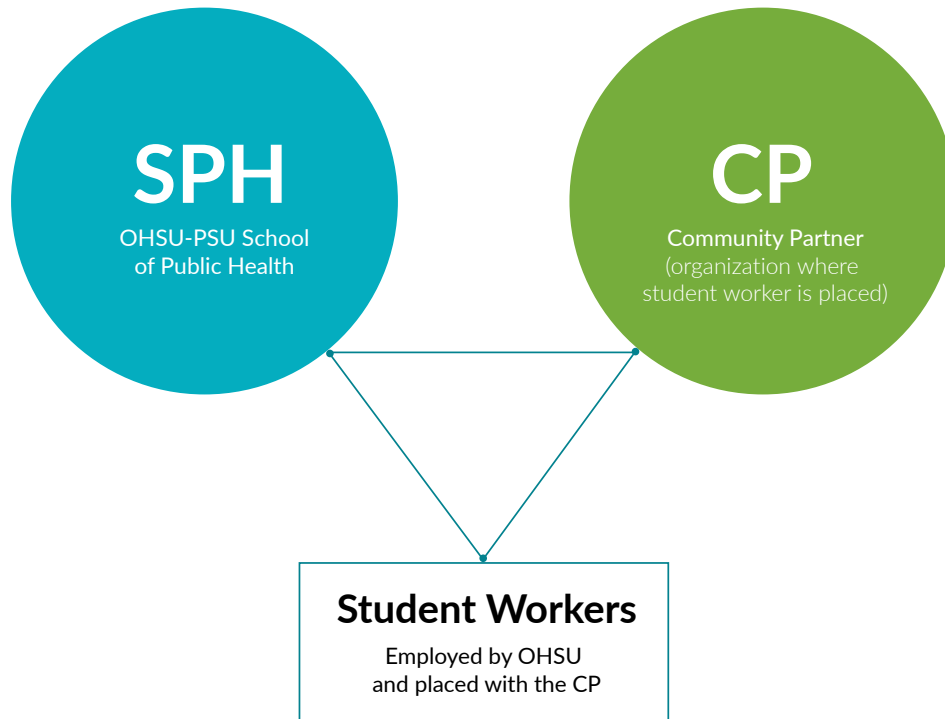
As a Mexican woman who speaks Spanish, I was brought onto the team as a Spanish-speaking case investigator. There was a public health need for more individuals to engage with the Latinx community. By bringing me onto the team, I felt that this was an effort toward health equity to reach vulnerable populations. As the work progressed and we transitioned to vaccine promotion, this gave me an opportunity to understand how OHA was shifting focus on vaccine equity.

Taurica Salmon is an MPH alum of the OHSU-PSU School of Public Health, an alum of our COVID-19 Team, and is currently employed as a Travel Epidemiologist by OHA

Team Operations

Co-Supervision Model

Communication between the SPH, CP, and the Student Worker is essential



SPH/OHA Collaborative Projects to date:

- **COVID-19 case management:** Engaged in various COVID-19 surge work including recovery calls, contact tracing, and case investigation.
- **Vaccine navigation:** Assisted with needs assessment, design, and implementation of a new program to support vaccine access for Oregonians with barriers to access.
- **COVID-Net:** Conducted medical chart abstraction for patients who were hospitalized with COVID-19, helping determine progression of severe COVID-19.
- **Health Security, Preparedness, and Response:** Supported analysis, evaluation, and planning Oregon's systems for confronting major emergencies.
- **Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity data collection:** Helped define best practices for collection of demographic information in the most respectful manner possible.
- **Emergency Medical Services and Trauma Systems Program:** Assisted with summarizing existing trauma and performance measures and writing code to operationalize metrics.
- **Program Design and Evaluation Services:** Supporting the Aid and Assist program through secondary research to better understand how other states are assisting persons whose mental health complicates their fitness to stand trial.

Team Operations

Forming a New Collaborative Team

The Hiring and Workforce Development Process:

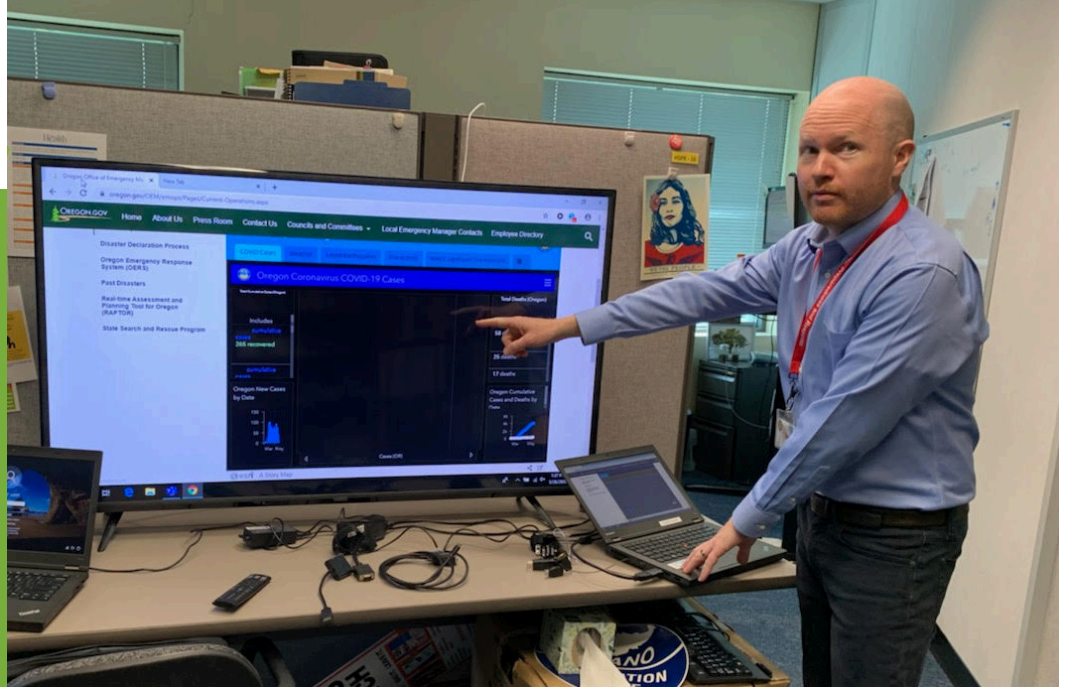
- 1 Define the Project and PHPT involvement:** PHPT and Community Partner personnel partner to establish the goals, approach, and staffing needs of the project.
- 2 Agree Upon and Execute a Contract:** PHPT and Community Partner create a Scope of Work reflecting agreed-upon tasks, and establish a contractual relationship enabling work to proceed.
- 3 Create a Position Description:** PHPT leadership works with the Community Partner organization to create the description for the student worker position.
- 4 Post the Position & Recruit:** PHPT advertises the position and handles recruitment.
- 5 Conduct Candidate Review & Initial Interviews:** PHPT reviews candidates; vets for qualifications; and conducts initial interviews.
- 6 Second Interviews & Candidate Selection:** Preferred candidates are scheduled for a second interview with the Community Partner. After the second interview, the Community Partner selects the students they'd like us to hire.
- 7 Offers are Made:** PHPT works with OHSU HR make offers to final candidates. For candidates who accept offers, OHSU staff completes HR paperwork and background checks.
- 8 Once hired, Student Workers are Co-Supervised by PHPT & Community Partner**
 - PHPT handles timekeeping and related administrative details.
 - The community partner provides day-to-day supervision for student workers.
 - PHPT leadership checks in with students on a regular basis to provide feedback, support, mentorship, and problem-solving guidance as needed.
 - If necessary, PHPT will terminate students who are not meeting reasonable professional expectations per PHPT and OHA standards. This is rare.
 - PHPT and OHA leaders meet biweekly to discuss progress, any concerns, and positive feedback.
 - PHPT conducts performance evaluation for students reaching 6 months on the job (if applicable).



Community Partners' Voices

"I appreciate the overall ease of getting the student workers on board. The PHPT leadership team takes care of the HR work, which is just a delight."

**Eric Gebbie (OHA/
HSPR)**



"I'm incredibly appreciative and really blown away by the quality of the students who have worked with us. They've been eager. They've been willing to learn. And they're intelligent and well-educated. And they're really, really engaged."

Amanda Faulkner, Epidemiologist 3, OHA



"One of the greatest benefits to the students is their ability to jump into shorter term projects. At the state level many folks have very full plates and when a new project comes in, it often takes quite some time to shift capacity to the work. SPH students are perfect to support this work and get to utilize the knowledge they're getting in their courses while gaining practical working experience. Students are flexible, innovative, and they'll be the next wave of public health professionals."

Amelia Reynolds, Wildfire Coordinator for the Oregon Health Authority

Can employment with the PHPT be combined with the Practice Experience?

No, this employment opportunity cannot be combined with the PE. However, these positions often enable student workers to network with a variety of OHA projects, and this can potentially result in finding a PE placement that is aligned with the student's interests.

PHPT/Student Worker Employment

Practice Experience

No school credit

VS

For school credit

Paid

VS

Not paid

Co-Supervision of PHPT Leadership Team and Community Partners

VS

Community Partner supervises, with SPH faculty sign off

0-29 hours per week; min. 6 month commitment

VS

Generally 150-160 hours



Public Health in Oregon: Looking Toward the Future

The COVID-19 pandemic changed our society in significant ways. Along with the more recent concerns and challenges of MPox and RSV, the critical need for strong public health systems and well-trained public health professionals is more on the radar within the field as well as among the general public.

We will continue to collaborate with all manner of partners on public health practice work, which will strengthen our state's public health infrastructure, forge community partnerships, train the next generation of the public health workforce, advance health equity, and protect the public's health.



"It excites me to know that we're able to positively influence these students who are going to be the future of our public health workforce."

Amanda Faulkner (OHA/Epi)



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