**DOH INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW FACT SHEET**

***What is an informational interview?***

An informational interview provides the chance to have an informal, low-stakes conversation with an entry-level or a seasoned professional/practitioner in your field of interest. Informational interviews can be valuable for people at any point in their career, but are particularly useful for students for a few reasons:

1. ***Informational interviews can help you decide what it is you would like to do after you finish your degree***. In public health, there is often fewer built-in job shadowing opportunities prior to employment than in other fields (for example, those who are pursuing clinical degrees typically go through a clinical rotation). Informational interviews can help you discover not only which subject matter areas interest you, but also what types of work excite you.

For instance-

* Do you like meeting with external partners and stakeholders?
* Are you passionate about writing and developing policy and rules?
* Do you think data analysis and applied epidemiology are exciting?
* Do you want to prioritize direct services and program delivery?

Informational interviews can be a key opportunity to begin to develop and refine your opinions about these important questions.

1. ***Informational interviews often provide an opportunity for advice from professionals who are currently doing the type of work you may want to pursue***. You can use their expert advice and insights to strategically plan your course of study or determine what types of internships or projects would be most helpful for the work you want to pursue.
2. ***Informational interviews help you learn about what kinds of organizations do the work you are interested in.*** You can begin to develop educated opinions about which organizations, or which types of organizations, are the best fit for your professional and career goals. Informational interviews can also serve as a cornerstone in developing your own professional network.
3. ***Informational interviews are a great opportunity to learn about possible internship, practicum, and capstone opportunities***.

At DOH, we encourage students interested in public health to think of informational interviews as a critical opportunity to understand public health practice and the role of a public health at the local/community, state, or federal/national level. It is your window into the world of public health and can help bridge the gap between what you’re learning in the academic environment and what is actually taking place in the field.

***How do I prepare for an informational interview?***

The good news is that preparing for an informational interview is very easy! Unlike a formal job interview where you are typically asked to speak about yourself and share why you might be qualified for a position, an informational interview is not about you, but about the person sitting across from you.

That being said, your informational interview will be more productive if you do some prep work before you meet with your interviewee. Specifically, it’s a good idea before your informational interview to pick at least 4 to 6 questions that you’d like to ask the person. Keep the questions informal and conversational.

A few examples of questions that you might ask could be:

* Tell me a little bit about what inspired you to take the path you’re currently on? What aspects of it interested you?

* Can you walk me through your schedule for a typical work day? What does a typical work day look like for you?
* What do like most about your job and what aspects do you find challenging?
* Looking back at your career, are there decisions that you made that you believe helped you in achieving your goals?
* Looking back, is there anything that you would do differently if you could do it again?
* Do you have any advice about any particular skillsets or experience either in or outside the classroom that I should acquire or focus on while I’m completing my coursework?
* Are there specific fellowships, internships, or other experiential learning opportunities that you would recommend for early career professionals in this field?
* Are there other individuals that you would recommend I connect with while I’m a student?

***How do I set up an informational interview?***

There’s no one way to set up an informational interview – you can approach guest speakers from class, you can ask faculty members for recommendations of professionals to reach out to, or you can just simply email people who are doing work you find interesting.

At DOH, we know cold calling/contacting people can be daunting so we’ve made it a bit easier for you to reach out to us! We have created an informational interview request form. Simply complete the form and we will do our best to find an employee that matches your interests.

***What are some informational interview ‘Dos’ and ‘Don’ts’?***

Here are some typical informational interview Dos and Don’ts:

* ***Do*** reach out to a broad range of people. It’s helpful to speak to and hear from a variety of professionals who have done many different types of work. You might be surprised by what interests you and what doesn’t!
* ***Do*** consider reaching out to more than one person at a time. Casting a wider net with busy professionals goes a long way to ensure you will actually get an informational interview in time! Plus, reaching out to multiple people at once can take the pressure off of any one opportunity.
* ***Do*** send thank you notes after you’ve met with someone (either via a card or email). Consider sharing aspects of the interview that you found to be most inspirational, exciting or simply enjoyable.
* ***Don’t*** ask your interviewee for a job directly, even though you may be very interested in working with this individual or for their organization. This request can place interviewees in a challenging position and make the rest of the interview feel rather uncomfortable. Instead, ask them about what types of skills sets and experiences they think are important, ask them about how they have approached job search processes in the past, and do express that you would be very interested in hearing about any upcoming opportunities that come across their desk.
* ***Do*** begin this process early – maybe as soon as late fall of the first year of your MPH. Many exciting opportunities can arise from doing informational interviews and you want to have the time to take advantage of them!