

PHN Profile- Sara Mackiewicz, RN, BSN

Ashland County Health & Human Services and Bayfield County Health Department

Sara Mackiewicz is a public health nurse with Ashland County Health & Human Services and Bayfield County Health Department. Sara said she was called to a specialty of Public Health Nursing while working as a massage practitioner because she saw a lot of clients with chronic health issues who couldn't afford health care and she wanted to help these individuals on a larger scale. This is what led Sara to the nursing program at the University of Wisconsin—Eau Claire, and introduced her to public health. Sara's public health instructor, Susan Moch (recipient of the 2012 Mary Adelaid Nutting Award presented by the WPHA) supported Sara with her pursuit towards a career in public health by encouraging her to participate in a public health internship. In summer 2010, Sara moved to Bayfield County for an AHEC internship (Area Health Education Center), where she had the opportunity to work with the public and see what public health is all about.



Sara reaches a wide variety of people of all ages. She provides prenatal education and support to help promote healthy birth outcomes to women with high-risk pregnancies, works with newborn babies through the Maternal Child Health (MCH) program, provides immunizations to people of all ages, assists with blood pressures and cholesterol screenings, helps with case management for residents with mental health issues who require assistance with medication administration, and helps with flu clinics at local senior centers.

The changes Sara has seen in the population include her work at the individual-level with prenatal clients who would like to quit smoking and are successful. Sara provides smoking cessation education at Prenatal Care Coordination (PNCC) visits to pregnant clients using the First Breath program. Sara said she had the opportunity to work with a wide variety of individuals through her experience as a public health nurse and she understands how important it is to create positive change through community and systems-level work as well.

Sara is currently assisting with the Ashland and Bayfield Counties 2013-2015 Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). The Ashland & Bayfield County CHIP focuses on developing and implementing a local health plan to address health conditions impacting Ashland and Bayfield County residents. The project focuses on planning and implementation of evidence-based interventions specifically targeting the health focus area of Alcohol & Other Drug Abuse in alignment with *Healthiest Wisconsin 2020*. The unique thing about the plan is that it involves not only the collaboration between local health departments (Ashland and Bayfield Counties), but also between health departments and the local hospital. The expected outcome from this project is to have an increased awareness as a community of alcohol and other drug abuse as a problem and to have a coalition developed to begin working on these issues over the next three years.

The most rewarding part of Sara's career is that there is always something new to learn and there is always the opportunity for continued learning and education. Sara also enjoys working with a wide variety of people with such a vast age range of clients. Sara stated that "Being a public health nurse is not just a career to me, it's who I am. However, I can't always take the day-to-day job difficulties home with me, or I'd never be able to relax!"

Sara wants students to know that public health nursing is broad, and there are many areas to be involved in. She finds herself doing a wide range of things from MCH home visits to make sure new parents are comfortable with adjusting to life with a newborn after discharge from the hospital to inspecting dirty houses to make sure that they are not a threat to the public's health and to help promote healthier living environments for residents of the community of which she serves.

Sara is excited to continue on with her education by becoming a Certified Lactation Specialist this upcoming May so that she can help support soon-to-be moms with breastfeeding education. Her future goal is to obtain a Masters Degree in Public Health, "But," she states, "there's always something new to learn."

*Interviewed by University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Nursing Students: Josiah Dierbeck, Jeanette Angermeier, Julie Klackner, Camille Lucjak, Dami Olaniyi, Ellen Wegner
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