

Winter 2026 – MPH Health Promotion Practicum Abstracts

L.A.

Infectious Diseases and Vaccination Programs, Public Health Agency of Canada

During my practicum at the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), I worked on a policy-focused project examining the relationship between the digital health information environment, vaccine confidence, and health security. The work centered on understanding how people encounter, interpret, and act on health information in a rapidly evolving digital context, and how these conditions can shape trust in public health guidance and influence protective health behaviours such as vaccination.

A major focus of the placement involved exploring how misinformation and disinformation circulate within platform-based information systems and how these dynamics intersect with broader public health goals. This included examining key issues such as changing patterns of health information seeking, the role of digital platforms in shaping visibility and credibility, public trust in health institutions and professionals, and the implications of fragmented information systems during periods of uncertainty or crisis. I used this research to contribute to a written policy brief that explored strategic considerations for strengthening Canada's public health resilience in the context of an evolving digital information environment.

The practicum also involved reviewing Canadian and international approaches to vaccine confidence, public trust, and emergency preparedness in order to identify common themes, policy gaps, and areas for strategic consideration. Particular attention was given to the ways digital information systems can either support or undermine coordinated public health action, and to the importance of credible, accessible, and trusted health information as part of broader public health resilience.

Overall, the placement provided an opportunity to engage with emerging policy questions at the intersection of communication, governance, and health security, and to examine how digital information environments are becoming increasingly relevant to public health planning and response.

N.A.

Health Promotion and Protection Policy and Programs Branch, Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health, Public Health

This practicum, completed within the Health Promotion and Protection Branch at the Ontario Ministry of Health, Public Health provided a comprehensive, policy-focused learning experience supporting the Smoke-Free Ontario Strategy. The placement aimed to strengthen competencies in policy analysis, communication, collaboration, and project management while contributing to population-level tobacco and vaping control efforts.

Key accomplishments included conducting literature reviews and environmental scans on emerging policy options (e.g., age-21 restrictions, nicotine-free generations), reviewing legislation and policy options, and supporting development of briefing and decision-making materials for senior leadership. Additional contributions involved scanning cessation services across Ontario's 29 Public Health Units and supporting performance monitoring through the review of their annual service plans. The practicum also involved regular engagement with Public Health Units and stakeholders, coordination of corporate correspondence, and collaboration with internal teams and Ministry partners.

The experience achieved all intended objectives, as demonstrated through the quality, timeliness, and integration of deliverables into ongoing policy work, as well as continuous supervisor feedback. The practicum closely aligned with MPH Health Promotion coursework, translating theoretical frameworks (i.e., policy process models, health communication principles) into applied practice within a government context.

This placement contributed to public health by supporting evidence-informed policy development and implementation under the SFO Strategy, reinforcing prevention, protection, and cessation efforts across the province. It also deepened my understanding of how health promotion principles are operationalized within complex policy systems. Overall, the practicum strengthened core health promotion competencies and provided valuable insight into public sector policy work, confirming readiness for a future career in public health policy.

K.B.

Azrieli Adult Neurodevelopmental Centre, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health

In my practicum at the Azrieli Adult Neurodevelopmental Centre at CAMH, I contributed to qualitative and community-engaged public health research focused on improving access to care for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). My work covered qualitative analysis, CAMH Research Ethics Board (REB) submission, and stakeholder engagement.

I supported qualitative data analysis by attending focus groups, transcribing interviews, and collaborating on the restructuring of a codebook with the application of the framework analysis to guide the approach. I also contributed to the development of a complex REB amendment for the primary care study, which involved changes to sampling, recruitment strategies, eligibility criteria, and data collection methods, including the introduction of an Expression of Interest screening tool and focus groups. These changes strengthened the study's ability to capture diverse and equity-relevant perspectives while meeting study objectives.

In addition to my two primary projects, I supported a large case management training event, supporting logistics, managing interactive components, and synthesizing qualitative findings for future dissemination. I also contributed to the process of instituting a new governance structure within the Self-Advocacy Advisory Committee to support the development and leadership of adults with IDD who are passionate about IDD advocacy at CAMH. I have also supported the application of the WPR framework on a critical analysis that interrogates how disability is conceptualized in mental health policies.

This practicum strengthened my skills in qualitative data analysis, lived experience engagement, and community-engaged research, deepening my understanding of how health systems shape access to care.

K.C.

Centre on Aging, University of Calgary

The aim of my practicum project was to enhance older adults' awareness and use of community and healthcare programs and services in Calgary by improving access to and navigation of relevant information. As Project Lead, the first responsibility of my practicum was to conduct an environmental scan to identify and document existing programs and services for older adults in Calgary. This required me to develop an approach to gathering and extracting online information, and to seek feedback on this approach from our project partners, the Age-Friendly Calgary Working Group. I then spent a significant amount of time extracting data through online resources and compiling it into an Excel file. The first draft of the environmental scan is now complete and includes 700 programs and services from over 330 organizations. The second major responsibility of my practicum was to administer a city-wide survey to older adults to gain insights on information-seeking behaviours, barriers and facilitators to accessing information, and preferences for a digital tool. I provided input on the survey design, coordinated with the Working Group and community partners to facilitate its distribution, and monitored survey participation. I also developed a quantitative data analysis plan, which I will be applying once all survey data have been collected. I will remain in the Project Lead position until the conclusion of this project, and the foundational work I have completed in my practicum well positions me to lead the remaining project activities. The major output of this project is a digital tool for older adults that centralizes program and service information (gathered from the environmental scan), which will be developed through user-centred design methodology.

Y.G.

EVOLVERE Mental Health

My winter practicum was completed at EVOLVER Mental Health Inc., an organization working to address student mental health through student-led initiatives and the use of digital tools in its programming. In my role as a mental health promotion researcher, I contributed to the development and implementation of pilot study activities aimed at understanding how racially and ethnically minoritized post-secondary students conceptualize mental health and mental health-supporting behaviours at the self-guided level, as well as assessing the broader mental health needs of the post-secondary student community. My major accomplishments included, first, redesigning the survey titled *"It's Not You, It's Poor Mental Health Resources"* and developing a survey distribution strategy; second, developing the analytical methodology for the pilot study and conducting a detailed analysis of the Canadian Campus Wellbeing Survey (CCWS).

The practicum aligned closely with my coursework, particularly *Data Collection Methods for Research and Evaluation Projects*, by allowing me to apply theory to real-world research tasks. It also reinforced the importance of clear language, careful wording, flexibility, and contextual awareness in data collection. Through this experience, I strengthened competencies in survey design and distribution, communication, planning and evaluation, and collaboration. Although some responsibilities were demanding and balancing coursework with practicum tasks required adjustment, I managed these challenges through time management, and continuous communication my supervisor.

C.G.

Institute for Mental Health Policy Research, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health

My practicum role was as a research trainee in the 2SLGBTQ+ Youth Health and Homelessness Research Lab housed at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH). Through this role, I immersed myself in several research projects centered around the wellbeing of transgender and gender-diverse (TGD) youth. Two of these were qualitative studies about the protective mental health factors and healthcare system experiences of TGD youth, respectively, and my work involved transcribing interview data, conducting preliminary analyses, and preparing resources to support participants post-interview. For a different research project on peer navigation for HIV prevention and care among 2SLGBTQ+ youth who are street-involved, I contributed to writing the background and methods section of a scientific manuscript that is expected to be published.

In addition, I had the opportunity to pitch an informal knowledge translation project to raise awareness of the wellness needs of 2SLGBTQ+ young people. My team and I ended up writing a piece to celebrate Transgender Day of Visibility, using quotes from interview participants to emphasize the impact of social support on TGD youth. Finally, I supported the activities of the research team through day-to-day tasks, such as preparing materials for grant submissions and adapting data collection tools to ensure they are well-suited to our study population.

S.G.

Prairie Climate Centre, Public Health Agency of Canada

I completed my practicum with the Prairie Climate Centre through the Public Health Agency of Canada's co-op program, where I created various knowledge translation resources that explored the intersection of aging and climate change. First, I conducted a high-level environmental scan exploring the relationship between aging and climate change by looking at websites, reports, and literature. Then, I translated this complex information into a high-level and plain-language article that focused on health equity, social determinants of health, gaps, and strategies for promoting more age-friendly and climate-resilient communities. I also recruited and helped interview subject matter experts to help strengthen the article with lived experience and insights. The information found in the environmental scan also influenced the development of a toolkit focused on promoting conversations around climate change between younger and older generations across various settings to reduce ageism, build solidarity, and promote climate action across generations. All of these resources will be uploaded onto the Climate Atlas of Canada, a national knowledge platform hosted by the Prairie Climate Centre that aims to educate various audiences on climate change. Through this practicum, I strengthened my skills in knowledge translation, visual communications, and research while increasing my knowledge on climate change, especially at the intersection of aging and health equity.

N.G.

Centre for Global Health, Dalla Lana School of Public Health

During my 16-week practicum at the Centre for Global Health, I worked across two programs under the Mastercard Foundation portfolio: the Joint Faculty Development (JFD) program and the Doctor of Public Health (DrPH) program. My work focused on supporting program evaluation, student engagement, and knowledge development activities. Within JFD, I analysed case compendium survey data, contributed to the development of evaluation tools, supported faculty engagement activities, and began drafting a case study on the program's needs assessment. Within the DrPH program, I supported the design of surveys and interview guides, contributed to focus group discussions, organized scholar interviews, and assisted with profiling activities for graduating scholars. In addition, I contributed to cross-cutting initiatives including the JFD-DrPH synergy exploration, a global health competency mapping exercise and early-stage grant development, while also participating in broader Centre activities. These experiences strengthened key Health Promotion competencies, including applied research and data analysis, knowledge translation and communication, stakeholder engagement, and program planning and evaluation. Overall, this practicum provided practical insight into how global health programs are designed, implemented, and improved, particularly within Global North-Global South partnerships, and strengthened my ability to contribute to this work in a meaningful and structured way.

S.K.

Women's College Research Institute - Addressing Sex Trafficking through Education and Research, Women's College Hospital

This term, I conducted a practicum with ASTER (Addressing Sex Trafficking through Education and Research) at Women's College Hospital. ASTER undertakes numerous activities to combat domestic sex trafficking, including evidence synthesis; research on survivors' and service providers' experiences; developing curricula and other tools to improve care for sex trafficked persons; and building cross-sectoral networks to strengthen the provincial response to sex trafficking. As a practicum student, my main deliverables consisted of designing a social media campaign that aimed to change service providers' practices and preparing a research brief on control tactics utilized by domestic sex traffickers.

For the first deliverable, I conducted a brief literature scan on similar human trafficking campaigns, as well as looked through ASTER materials to identify key themes or concepts. After proposing ideas to my team, I drafted content using ASTER's research, ASTER's curricula, and external literature. Overall, I created four posts on collaborating to support survivors; integrating intersectionality into practice; fostering survivor-driven care; and supporting trauma- and violence-informed care with information on these concepts, key practice-oriented tips, and links to ASTER resources for further learning. These posts were strengthened through multiple rounds of feedback by team members and ASTER's advisory committee.

For the second deliverable, I, alongside another team member, extracted and analyzed data on control tactics from a series of interviews with survivors who have experienced sex trafficking. We utilized reflexive thematic analysis to inductively and deductively code the data, then sorted it according to themes representing the sexual exploitation process. Based on our work, I drafted an abstract and research poster for a conference at Women's College Hospital. I also designed an infographic for the general public that will be published on the ASTER website and prepared a research brief intended for an academic journal.

Through my experience at ASTER, I have gained further insight into research and knowledge translation.

L.L.

National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health

While working with the National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health, I assisted on a number of projects including a program evaluation, conference session, health equity brief, and grant application. I was primarily brought on to assist with a program evaluation for the NCCDH as a whole, where I assisted in leading focus groups of knowledge translation material users and in qualitative thematic analysis of transcript data. My role expanded to include assisting organizing a session on health equity for 2SLGBTQI+ populations for the Canadian Public Health Association's annual conference, which I co-moderated. I was able to continue working on a brief on 2SLGBTQI+ health equity that I had a hand in writing during my first practicum, as the brief is a collaboration between my first and second practicum organizations. I had leveraged this collaboration to obtain this second practicum. I lastly helped to fill a gap on a CIHR grant being submitted related to rural healthcare for 2SLGBTQI+ population by writing the background/rationale. My work at the NCCDH has ranged from highly independent (analysis of program evaluation data) to highly collaborative (CPHA session, health equity brief), and I have appreciated the diversity of tasks within my role. Working at the NCCDH has also provided me great opportunity to connect with others working within public health, learn where there have been tensions and progress in advancing health equity work, and gain exposure to some of the practical solutions that have been implemented across the field to address equity.

C.L.

Azrieli Adult Neurodevelopmental Research Centre, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health

This practicum was completed at the Azrieli Adult Neurodevelopmental Centre at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH), focusing on improving research and service delivery for adults with neurodevelopmental disabilities. Key activities included supporting a CIHR Project Grant and drafting a corresponding Research Ethics Board (REB) application for a co-designed, neuroaffirming digital intake tool for adult autism assessment. Additional contributions included data cleaning and preliminary analysis for a national dementia screening study, development of national staff and family caregiver surveys, and involvement in a self-advocate advisory board and connection committee.

The practicum strengthened skills in applied research, co-design, collaboration, and academic writing, while reinforcing the importance of accessibility and inclusive approaches in health promotion. Overall, it provided practical experience in translating public health theory into real-world research and system-level impact.

K.M.

The Department of Strategy, Corporate Planning, and Partnerships, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health

The department of Strategy, Corporate Planning, and Partnerships at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) is responsible for developing and communicating evidence-informed public policy on a range of policy issues (e.g. mental health, substance use, and the social determinants of health). As a Public Policy Student at CAMH, I had the opportunity to conduct an evaluation of the province's primary social assistance programs, Ontario Works (OW) and the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), placing specific emphasis on the needs of individuals with mental health and substance use challenges who rely on these supports. I integrated peer-reviewed research, grey literature, and reports of the lived- and clinical experiences of social assistance recipients to identify systemic barriers across three stages in the process of securing ODSP or OW: initial eligibility for support, the application process, and the post-application process for both successful and unsuccessful applicants.

Under the supervision of a Senior Policy Analyst, as my final deliverable, I produced a policy brief that culminated in a set of recommendations for income assistance reform. Targeted at the provincial government and other stakeholders in the sector, the recommendations focused on improving the accessibility, adequacy, and effectiveness of income supports for all Ontarians, with specific considerations for individuals living with mental illness and disabilities. In this role, I was able to expand upon my understanding of how social assistance can function to reinforce cycles of poverty, as well as how specific groups are disadvantaged by current pathways to securing assistance. While developing the brief and working to tailor my recommendations to a wide range of audiences, I also was able to hone my research, project management, leadership, policy analysis, and knowledge translation skills.

S.N.

Centre for Global Health, Dalla Lana School of Public Health

My practicum at the Centre for Global Health, Dalla Lana School of Public Health, University of Toronto, gave me the opportunity to work at the intersection of global health education, student support, and institutional collaboration. Across the placement, I supported three main areas of work. I contributed to the Mathematical Epidemiology Program, a partnership between the University of Toronto and AIMS in Rwanda and Cameroon, where I focused on the practicum and internship phase by helping build a partner database, coordinate placement related information, and identify synergies between student interests and potential host organizations. I also supported the Women in Global Health Leadership Fellowship through program evaluation, report writing, survey design, and planning for an in person phase focused on leadership development for early to mid career women in health. In addition, I contributed to evaluation related work exploring student experiences within a doctoral program.

This practicum helped me better understand how programs are not only delivered, but continuously improved through evaluation, coordination, and collaboration. It strengthened my skills in communication, planning, and applied Health Promotion, while also deepening my appreciation for equity centered approaches in education and global health. Overall, the placement was a meaningful learning experience that allowed me to contribute to initiatives designed to strengthen leadership, workforce development, and more inclusive opportunities in global health.

A.R.

Office of Spread and Scale, Women's College Hospital

This practicum was completed at Women's College Hospital within the Office of Spread and Scale, contributing to an AMS-funded qualitative research project titled Scaling with Compassion. The project aims to understand how compassionate, person-centred care can be sustained during the scale-up of digital health and artificial intelligence (AI) innovations, with a strong emphasis on engaging people with lived and living experience (PWLE) as research partners.

In this role, I supported the design and implementation of a patient-partnered qualitative study exploring facilitators and barriers to compassionate scale. My contributions spanned multiple phases of the research process, including refining interview guides, coordinating and managing participant recruitment, and serving as the primary point of contact for study participants. I co-conducted semi-structured interviews alongside patient partners, applying trauma-informed and reflexive interviewing approaches to ensure ethical and meaningful engagement. In addition, I contributed to a scoping review on models of scale in digital health and supported early-stage qualitative data organization and synthesis.

Beyond data collection, I played a key role in knowledge translation activities, including co-developing an abstract and poster for presentation at Women's College Hospital's Day of Excellence in Academics. This practicum strengthened my skills in qualitative research, patient engagement, implementation science, and project coordination. It also reinforced the importance of embedding compassion and equity into the scaling of digital health innovations to ensure that technological advancements meaningfully improve patient care and health system outcomes.

H.Z.

Public Health Ontario

I conducted my practicum at Public Health Ontario (PHO) under the Population Health portfolio. My project centered on a population health survey examining public opinions on alcohol cancer warning labels. My primary contributions included building data collection and cleaning pipelines with integrity checks, preparing a quantitative analysis plan, designing and evaluating a Delphi survey on warning label designs, setting up data collection infrastructure, and creating study recruitment materials. The practicum allowed me to apply epidemiological, biostatistical, and health promotion knowledge in an integrated, real-world setting. I gained practical experience with various survey and data analysis tools in the context of a full study lifecycle from instrument design through recruitment planning to analysis preparation. Working within PHO's institutional structure taught me to navigate multi-departmental review processes and communicate progress effectively. The project's findings will contribute evidence to inform alcohol cancer warning label policy across Canada. This practicum reinforced my competencies in public health research, quantitative methods, and cross-institutional collaboration.

J.Z.

Thunder Bay District Health Unit, Public Health Agency of Canada

Climate change is increasingly being recognized as a public health emergency both globally and within Canada. Climate change has significant impacts on human health through climate hazards such as poor air quality, extreme heat, extreme weather, water contamination, UV radiation, increase in vector-borne diseases, food insecurity and poor mental health. As a student public health officer in the Canadian Public Health Service (CPHS) program at the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), I was placed at Thunder Bay District Health Unit (TBDHU), where I worked on developing a comprehensive climate change action workplan for the Thunder Bay region. The purpose of the action plans was threefold: 1) understand the context of climate change in the TBDHU region, 2) identify gaps in climate change work across various Ontario public health units (PHUs), and 3) provide a practical guide for the TBDHU health promotion team. I started developing the workplan by conducting an environmental scan of all the Ontario PHUs to collection information about the type of existing climate change work. In my gap analysis, I identified that majority of climate change information on Ontario PHU websites are siloed, with very few making connections between climate change and mental health. In my situational assessment of TBDHU, I reviewed previous federal, provincial, and regional climate adaptation plans to synthesize information from existing climate change policies and initiatives. In my SWOT analysis, I created a table of potential community partners TBDHU can collaborate with. In the last phase of my practicum, I utilized findings from my environmental scan and situational assessment to develop a theory and change and logic model. These tools can be used by TBDHU to advance climate adaptation efforts in creating more climate-health opportunities.