

FALL 2019 NEWSLETTER

Virginia Tech Center for Public Health Practice and Research



Virginia Tech
Center for Public Health
Practice and Research

What we do, who we are, who we serve

The **Center for Public Health Practice and Research (CPHPR)** at Virginia Tech engages interdisciplinary faculty, staff and students at Virginia Tech and community organizations to enhance public health practice and research in the region. The Center is housed in the Department of Population Health Sciences, Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine.

The Center supports community-based projects by collaborating with community partners to compete for and secure funding, as well as providing public health content and service expertise such as research studies, external evaluations, needs assessments and document writing. Through the Public Health Network, the Center partners with faculty, staff and students at Virginia Tech. The Center collaborates with university partners on grant writing, study design, implementation and evaluation and offers technical public health expertise.

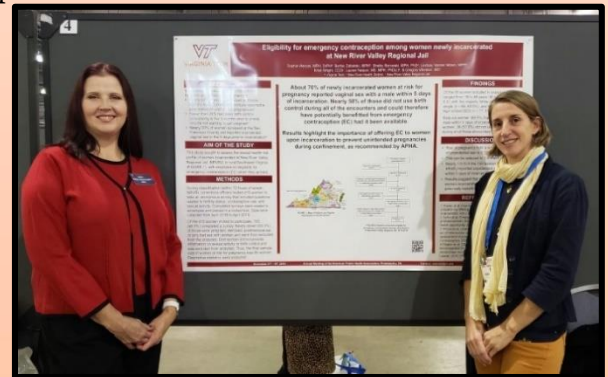
The overarching goal for the Center is to enhance public health practice and research, particularly in Southwest and Southside Virginia, Central Appalachia and across the region.

Workforce Development

Part of the mission of the CPHPR is providing workforce development throughout the region. Our faculty are available to work with your organization to design a training tailored to your needs. Possible training topics include communication, cultural competency, data management, program evaluation, grant writing and management, survey design, and more! We can provide a free training at your organization, which can range from an hour to a half-day. Please direct any questions or requests to CPHPR Project Coordinator, *Hannah Menefee* at hmenefee@vt.edu.

CPHPR at the American Public Health Association (APHA) Annual Meeting

CPHPR was represented on five posters or presentations at the APHA Annual Meeting the first week of November 2019, in Philadelphia, PA. Associate Director Sophie Wenzel and New River Valley Regional Jail Corrections Officer Kristi Wright presented results of a sexual health needs assessment for incarcerated women in the New River Valley Jail. Findings show that there is a high risk for unintended pregnancy immediately prior to incarceration in this population.



Pictured above: Kristi Wright (left) and Sophie Wenzel (right)

Nine Virginia Tech Master of Public Health students also attended to learn about national public health and represent the VT Public Health Program.



Some of our Current Projects

Evaluation of the Expanded Community Recovery Program

The Center is receiving funding from Piedmont Community Services to evaluate the expansion of the Community Recovery Program. This expanded program focuses on people with current substance use issues who cannot find a job, with the main goal being to find them treatment options and subsequent employment.



Virginia Prevention Region III East Suicide Prevention Plan

The Center is updating the Prevention Region III East Suicide Prevention Plan to reflect new primary and secondary data and an updated implementation plan. Community Service Boards in the eastern part of Region III are collaborating on this prevention plan.



New River Valley Community Services School-Based Programs

The Center is serving as an external evaluator for the New River Valley Community Service's school-based tobacco and drug prevention education programs. Center staff analyze pre and post test data to assess change in students' knowledge and attitudes.

Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic Evaluation

The Center is collaborating with the Virginia Tech Institute for Policy and Governance on the evaluation of New River Valley Community Services' (NRVCS) efforts to become a certified Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC). NRVCS is receiving funding from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA) to help expand the services they provide to the New River Valley community.

Obesity Prevention Projects

USDA Empowering Healthy Families

The Center is partnering with the Baptist General Convention of Virginia and Virginia Cooperative Extension to deliver the Healthy Children Healthy Families curriculum throughout the state. The long-term goals of the project are to:

- 1) Prevent and reduce childhood obesity through improved parenting practices and home environment related to obesity
- 2) Expand Extension capacity for community-engaged research and collaborative programming with faith-based organizations
- 3) Enhance Extension strategies for recruiting and training community volunteers to extend Extension reach
- 4) Train future health professionals to provide culturally appropriate collaborative community-based health programs



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: High Obesity Program - Petersburg, VA

The Center is collaborating with Cooperative Extension, Virginia State University and the Crater Health District to empower people to lead healthy lifestyles and reduce obesity in Petersburg, VA.

Opioid Abuse and Addiction Projects

Opioid abuse and addiction are affecting communities across the U.S. at alarming and sustained rates. There is a great need for research and interventions that address negative outcomes related to this crisis. Primary, secondary, and tertiary public health interventions in Virginia communities are all essential to combating the epidemic and supporting the health of Virginia residents. CPHPR is actively working to advance opioid abuse and addiction research and practice in Southwest Virginia and throughout the state through the projects highlighted below.

Helping Youth PROSPER and Avoid Opioid Misuse in Virginia (USDA/CYFAR-funded)

“PROMoting School-community-university Partnerships to Enhance Resilience” Model (PROSPER) uses a community-based approach to implement a family-level education program for adolescents and their families and a life skills intervention delivered through local schools.

PROSPER will be implemented in four Virginia communities by Virginia Cooperative Extension agents, with the goal of preventing opioid misuse. The Center is serving as the external evaluator on this project. The main outcome is that school aged youth will demonstrate knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors necessary for fulfilling contributing lives.

VHEOC: Virginia Higher Education Opioid Consortium

VHEOC is a collaboration of five Virginia public universities working together to support local efforts to prevent and treat opioid and other substance use disorders with cutting edge academic resources. The mission is to assist Community Services Boards (CSBs) to address the opioid crisis with services in the prevention, treatment/recovery, and collection and analysis of data related to substance use disorders, including opioids.

This model provides CSBs with a dedicated channel to access research expertise and technical assistance from member universities. Services are funded under the SAMSHA State Opioid Response grant to the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services.

VHEOC member universities include George Mason University, Old Dominion University, Virginia State University, University of Virginia, and Virginia Tech.

Please contact CPHPR for more information.

To learn more about current and past projects, visit our website at www.cphpr.publichealth.vt.edu/

Preventing and Reducing Opioid Misuse and Abuse in Rural Virginia (USDA/NIFA-funded)

In addition to the programming implemented as part of PROSPER, we have added a Mental Health First Aid training component for adult community partners. The Center will serve as an external evaluator on this project which will serve Virginia communities.

Rural Opioids Technical Assistance through Virginia Cooperative Extension (USDA/SAMHSA-funded)

This project builds upon the two projects above to expand training and technical assistance on opioid prevention through implementation of evidence-based curricula targeting middle school students and their families and school staff in eleven additional rural Virginia counties.

iTHRIV Clinical and Translational Science Awards (NIH funded)

CPHPR is participating in the integrated Translational Health Research Institute of Virginia (iTHRIV). This program works to optimize the use of data science to support research that benefits Virginia’s rural and urban populations. iTHRIV is the first cross-state effort to integrate broad biomedical research efforts to advance innovation in clinical practice and population health.



This is a five-year grant to support a research partnership between the University of Virginia, Inova Health Systems, Carilion, and Virginia Tech. Dr. Kathy Hosig, Center Director, is serving as the lead for the community and collaboration core.

~ Meet the CPHPR Graduate Research Assistants ~

Harper Lovegrove is a Master of Public Health student in the Public Health Education concentration, also completing her didactic program in dietetics. At CPHPR, she is assisting with the Empowering Healthy Families program. Harper graduated from George Mason University in 2017 with a B.S. in Community Health with a concentration in nutrition and plans to complete a dietetic internship to become a Registered Dietitian when she graduates.



Emilie Schweikert is a second year Master of Public Health student in the Infectious Diseases and Public Health Education concentrations. At the Center she is contributing to the Region III East Suicide Prevention Plan. She graduated from Virginia Tech in 2018 with a B.S. in Animal and Poultry Sciences and a minor in Agricultural and Applied Economics. When she graduates, Emilie hopes to work as an epidemiologist.

Samantha Seay is a second year Master of Public Health student in the Public Health Education concentration. She graduated from Virginia Tech in 2017 with a B.S. in Human, Nutrition, Foods, and Exercise. At the Center, Samantha is collaborating with the Institute for Policy and Governance and New River Valley Community Services on the Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic project. Upon graduation, Samantha plans to pursue a dietetic internship and become a Registered Dietitian to work in community nutrition.



Welcome to Rachel Silverman, CPHPR Research Scientist



Dr. Rachel Silverman is a Research Scientist for the Center and the Department of Population Health Sciences. She comes to Virginia Tech from the University of Washington School of Public Health, where she earned a PhD in Epidemiology in 2018. Her research interests include sexual and reproductive health, sexually transmitted diseases, infectious diseases, epidemiological methods, and applied epidemiology. Dr. Silverman also earned a ScM in Infectious Disease Epidemiology from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in 2011, and a BA in Biochemistry from Oberlin College in 2008. She enjoys photography, baking, and hiking with her husband, baby girl, and fluffy dog.



Welcome to Lisa Homa, CPHPR Project Associate

Lisa Homa is a Senior Project Associate with the Center. She earned MBA and MPH degrees from Virginia Tech in 2015 and 2016, respectively. Lisa has a background in nursing and clinical research. She is currently serving as the evaluator on the CDC High Obesity Program in Petersburg and works on other Center projects. Lisa enjoys fitness activities and spending time with her husband and three-year old boy and girl twins.



Sophie Wenzel,
DrPH, MPH
Associate Director,
CPHPR

A Note from the Director & Associate Director

Thank you for catching up on what is happening at CPHPR. The Center is now eight years old, and we are proud of its growth and accomplishments, many of which are highlighted in this newsletter. The Center has recently created an advisory board, consisting of one main advisory board and several regional boards representing Southwest and Southside Virginia. We have enjoyed traveling to meet with you and gain your valuable input on community needs. We thank you for the continued trust and support.

If you are interested in hearing from us or working with us, please contact us.

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Kathy Hosig,
PhD, MPH, RD
Director,
CPHPR

A special thanks to Virginia Tech's Institute for Society, Culture and Environment (ISCE) for continued support!