

# We Are

# Public Health

## Spotlighting public health students in the workforce

In celebration of National Public Health Week, the University of Montana's Public Health Student Association and the School of Public and Community Health Sciences has teamed up to spotlight public health students who also work in the public health workforce.

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## Lennon Keppen

Master of Public Health (MPH) Student



Lennon Keppen, RHIA, is a second-generation healthcare professional with previous professional background in Health Information Management (HIM) and is certified as a Registered Health Information Administrator (RHIA). Lennon works for the state of Montana Immunization Program, providing training and support to Montana's Immunization Information System (ISS).

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Lennon supports imMTrax, Montana's Immunization Information System (IIS). Immunization Information Systems are confidential, population-based, computerized databases that record immunization doses administered by participating providers residing within a given area. imMTrax is a population-level public health information system that stores immunization data for Montanans at all stages of life. The data from imMTrax allows the public to request a longitudinal record of immunizations for childcare, school, employment, travel and more.

IIS data can help improve medical care. Vaccine data can be used to inform clinical decision making. As the IIS Training & Support Specialist; Lennon assists with the daily operations of imMTrax. Lennon provides support to end users through training and education about the system. Lennon handles all end-user access processing.

Lennon supports partner organizations that send data electronically through an interface data exchange and responds to questions about system functionality to partners and the public. Lennon also handles requests for immunization records that come in through the state office.

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## Dustin Webb

Master of Public Health (MPH) Student



With a strong desire to make an impact on people and their livelihoods, Dustin sought employment within the interdisciplinary field of public health. As a Registered Sanitarian for the Lincoln County Health Department, Dustin's main job duties include county health inspection and air quality coordination.

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Dustin's journey started at Old Dominion University, located in Norfolk, VA, where he received a Bachelor of Science degree in biology. Dustin transitioned to northwest Montana and began working for the Lincoln County Health Department in 2019.

In the last semester of studies at the University of Montana, Dustin will soon receive a Master of Public Health degree. Dustin reports that the experience gained in the program is irreplaceable and encourages those unsure of a career path and have considered public health as an option to explore and reach out to individuals in the field.

Dustin believes the work public health professionals do is very rewarding and the potential impacts on people at every level are invaluable.

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## Stephanie Tassarò

Master of Public Health (MPH) Student



Stefanie joined the Montana Public Health Institute (MTPHI) in March 2022 as a Public Health Program Specialist and Administrative Coordinator. In this role, Stefanie provides organizational and programmatic support to the MTPHI team and the MTPHI's initiatives. Stefanie is motivated by collaboration and continuous improvement and is excited to work towards improving Montana's public health system.

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Stefanie got her start in public health serving as an AmeriCorps VISTA with the Gallatin City-County Health Department. Upon completing her year of service with AmeriCorps, Stefanie served as the Accreditation Coordinator and Quality Improvement Specialist for the Gallatin City-County Health Department from September 2015 until December 2020. In this role, Stefanie led public health accreditation efforts, community health assessment and improvement planning, and organizational strategic planning and performance management. In addition to local health department experience, Stefanie has also worked at the Montana Department of Public Health & Human Services as the Accreditation Coordinator.

Stefanie earned a Bachelor of Science in Pharmaceutical Sciences from Purdue University and is currently enrolled in the University of Montana's Master's in Public Health program. Stefanie is also an active member in the Montana Public Health Association.

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## B-Rad Applegate

PhD in Public Health Student



B-Rad is an Infectious Disease Specialist at the Missoula City-County Health Department. B-Rad loves to engage in community health outreach activities and serve as a resource for the medical community in Missoula. B-Rad's primary responsibility is to follow up on roughly 70 infectious diseases required by law to be reported to the health department with the goal of interrupting the chain of transmission.

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B-Rad started his career at MCCHD in July 2016 after finishing his Bachelor of Science in nursing. Starting in the outpatient clinic administering vaccines and working part-time in the infectious disease office, B-Rad fell in love with infectious disease work and within a year began the Master's in Public Health program at the University of Montana.

During this time, B-Rad began working on HIV outreach, offering HIV testing, counseling and education in nonclinical settings. B-Rad became aware of the relationship between stigma and infectious diseases in his graduate coursework and incorporated evidence-based practices to reduce stigma with outreach work.

B-Rad also loves to engage in community health outreach activities, including teaching students about sexually transmitted infectious, offering vaccines in nonclinical settings, educating wildland firefighters about infectious diseases they may encounter on the job, and serving as a resource for the medical community in Missoula.

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## Jacob Brown

Certificate in Public Health (CPH) Student



Jacob Brown is a CPH student and works for the Public Health Emergency Preparedness department of the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS). Jacob was heavily involved in the COVID-19 response and leaned on his experience as a wildland firefighter with FEMA's Incident Command Systems (ICS) throughout the pandemic, helping public health entities to be trained on ICS to use in their facilities.

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Upon graduating from high school in Utah, Jacob began working for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) on a wildland firefighting crew. At the conclusion of the season, Jacob went on a mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints to Mendoza Argentina.

Jacob received his Bachelor's degree in Emergency Management from Utah Valley University and, a year later, transferred to Miles City, MT where he continued with the BLM as an assistant on a wildland fire engine. In 2018, Jacob moved to Helena, MT to pursue a career with his Emergency Management degree, finding a job as an Emergency Management Specialist with DPHHS.

Jacob has been married almost 13 years and has two boys, ages 7 and 4, and a one year old daughter.

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## Abbie Phillip

Master of Public Health (MPH) Student



Abbie Phillip works at the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) as an epidemiologist focused on toxic metal surveillance and childhood lead poisoning prevention.

On public health, Abbie writes "public health touches every human experience and life on the planet."

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Abbie started her career in environmental quality in 2000. After a detour to raise two awesome sons, Abbie circled back in 2019 and enrolled in the Public Health program at the University of Montana to pursue a second career in environmental health.

In Spring of 2024, Abbie will complete her MPH with a certificate in epidemiology.

Abbie states "public health is my professional home, and there is a place here for everyone."

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## Thank You, Public Health Professionals!

The Public Health Student Association at the University of Montana would like to extend a warm note of gratitude to Lennon, Dustin, Stephanie, Abbie, B-Rad, and Jacob for their participation in the "We Are Public Health" spotlights in celebration of National Public Health Week.

Thank you to all those serving in the public health workforce, dedicating their work to the health and wellbeing of our communities.