CAREER PATHWAYS in Public Health Laboratory Science

Meet the Fellow

Aurora Mills, MPH

Host Lab: New Jersey Division of Public Health & Environmental Laboratories

Degree:	Masters
Graduated:	May 2020
School:	Temple University

What is your science background? Degree(s) of study?

I received my BS in Health Sciences at the University of Vermont and my Master of Public Health in Environmental Health with a Global Health certificate from Temple University.

How did you hear about the Public Health Laboratory Fellowship Program?

I was interested in public health laboratories after taking a class at Temple that explored different public health careers. My professor for this course recommended I apply to the fellowship program after graduation.

How did this fellowship match or exceed your expectations?

This fellowship allowed me the hands-on experience I was searching for and has given me a front-row seat of how a public health laboratory functions. Coming from more of a public health background, I was nervous about learning the nuances of a chemistry-heavy lab environment, but my mentor and those who have helped train me at the lab have been nothing but supportive.

What have you learned from your mentor?

My mentor is a strong leader who communicates and supports all members of our lab when needed. I've learned it is important to do everything with intention, whether it be in life or in work. Working with intention can lead us to question if there is an easier or more efficient way to do something, which in turn can increase our lab's productivity and efficiency. Science is constantly evolving, and I appreciate that he is open to new ideas in the name of betterment.

Tell us about your project assignments/laboratory roles.

Currently, much of my work is focused on detecting the mental analytes such as, lead, mercury, cadmium, selenium, and manganese in whole blood

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and arsenic, barium, beryllium, cadmium, lead, mercury, thallium, and uranium in urine.
I am working on the Prenatal Screening Project where my role is to analyze and report high levels of lead and mercury found from blood samples so that they can be reported back to the participating New Jersey hospital(s). I also analyze samples for the statewide surveillance study, New Jersey Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NJHANES). For this project I analyze blood and urine for the above analytes with the goal of identifying potential hot spots and trends throughout the state.

How has your fellowship experience inspired you?
My fellowship experience has confirmed my passion for public health. I am inspired by all dedicated and hardworking employees of the New Jersey DOH Public Health Environmental Laboratory that work to improve the health of the people in this state.

How would you describe the APHL Fellowship when recommending other students to apply?
The APHL Fellowship is a program that allows you to experience public health from behind the curtain. Public health programs, initiatives, and policy changes could not be possible without the work conducted in public health laboratories. Through the APHL Fellowship you will be learning real-life skills and seeing tangible public health results.