

Promoting Public Health with the New Orleans Health Department

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This summer, I had the opportunity to continue my journey as a Reproductive Health Intern with the New Orleans Health Department (NOHD). Over the semester, my supervisor, Meshawn A Siddiq, entrusted me with a series of tasks to complete for the NOHD. One of my first projects was collaborating with two undergraduate Reproductive Health Interns at Xavier University and the University of Alabama at Birmingham to research the different types of gym memberships offered in New Orleans. In an effort to increase the happiness, well-being, and retention of staff at the New Orleans Health Department, The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) is providing a grant to cover the gym membership fees for NOHD employees. Myself,

along with the two other interns, emailed and called different gyms in New Orleans to compare the cost of gym memberships, the options to pay, and the number of employees needed for the group membership. Once we compiled this information together, we distributed it to Nina Davis, an employee of the NOHD, so she could determine which gym was the best to partner with. The free gym membership is one way the NOHD can enhance the physical and mental health of their employees.

My second task this summer was producing a newborn supply kit one-pager. In 2023, The United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) began to partner with the non-profit organization, Baby2Baby to distribute newborn supply kits in the states with the highest maternal and infant mortality rates; Louisiana, Arkansas, and New Mexico. The newborn supply kits contain essential newborn and postpartum supplies to support families after their infant is born. My supervisor plans to share my one-pager with Louisiana Representative, Julia Letlow, to inform her of how the HHS newborn supply kit program is valuable in promoting maternal and child health in Louisiana. The first HHS pilot phase launched in 2023, and so far it has shown promising results such as improving maternal mental health outcomes and decreasing financial stress for recipients. The second pilot phase of the newborn supply kits are expected to launch in 2024. My one-pager contained: a background of baby boxes and newborn supply kits, the items included in the newborn supply kits, the early findings from the 2023 pilot program, the New Orleans 2024 distribution plans, and a picture of the items inside the newborn supply kit.

I am very pleased to know that my work this semester may benefit the New Orleans Health Department employees and the state of Louisiana. My research on gym memberships will be utilized to select the designated gym for NOHD employees and my one-pager on newborn supply kits will help educate individuals in Louisiana on this pivotal resource working to improve the state's maternal and child health crisis. Next semester, I will be continuing to research for the New Orleans Health Department while I am studying abroad in Denmark. I am looking forward to learning more about public health and maternal and child health from the perspective of a different country. I greatly appreciate the Newcomb Institute and the New Orleans Health Department for this opportunity to enrich my knowledge of maternal and child health.