

Ready for My Summer at CrescentCare!

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Hi everyone! My name is Isabel, and I am a rising senior here at Tulane University double majoring in public health and neuroscience. I am originally from England, but moved to New Orleans eleven years ago and have lived here ever since. Living in New Orleans has given me many unique life experiences and now, going to Tulane has opened up a world of new opportunities that I would have never imagined having. This summer, I am happy to say that I will be staying in New Orleans working

as a National HIV Behavioral Surveillance (NHBS) intern with CrescentCare.

CrescentCare is a Federally Qualified Health Center, based in New Orleans, that offers health and wellness services to anybody who needs them, regardless of that person's health insurance status or ability to pay. CrescentCare was formerly known as the NO/AIDS Task Force and was founded to help those struggling with HIV/AIDS. Because of Crescent Care's long history working with HIV/AIDS prevention in New Orleans and because of the work that they still do to help prevent HIV and treat those with HIV or AIDs, it makes sense that CrescentCare is home to the New Orleans branch of the National HIV Behavioral Surveillance (NHBS) system. crescent-care-848x400 NHBS is a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) initiative that was established to help researchers better understand trends and patterns in the HIV/AIDS epidemic. I will be working to conduct recruitment and collect data for the system's current cycle, the men who have sex with men (MSM) cycle. Before my internship begins I will be trained in HIV rapid testing and counseling and on how to interview study participants on their behavior. After training, my supervisors, fellow interns, and I will conduct data collection by recruiting study participants at venues that gay and bisexual men are known to frequent, testing them for HIV, and interviewing them about their behavior.

Through working on a CDC study, this internship will give me more public health knowledge and will help me to understand how large epidemiological studies are planned, implemented, and executed. Additionally, I will gain insight into human behavior and why people make the decisions that they do, which nicely ties into both of my majors. I am also going to have the opportunity to learn how to conduct HIV testing and on how to counsel people on HIV prevention and treatment. Conducting HIV testing and counseling and recruiting potential study participants in public areas will push me out of my comfort zone. This is going to be extremely beneficial to me going forward seeing as interacting with the community is such a large part of what public health is.

This position is an amazing cumulating experience to have going into my senior year at Tulane. I am going to be applying everything that I have learned about public health in the classroom to real life situations. I can only imagine how I am going to grow as a public health professional through this internship. I will be so much more prepared to take on a future role as a female leader in public health. I am currently preparing for my internship by reading up on reports for this cycle of NHBS and sitting in on counseling and testing sessions to prepare me for my own training. I am

looking forward to going out into the New Orleans community and interacting with its members and am very excited about all of the new skills that I will be learning. I begin training at the end of May and can't wait to give you more updates then.