

Brett Miner, MPH

2006 HSHPS/CDC Fellow

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Brett Miner was an English teacher in Mexico before he made the jump to public health. How does that happen?

“That’s a good question...,” says Brett, a Public Health Analyst for the CDC Appropriations, Legislation and Formulation Office. He pauses. “It wasn’t a planned career path.”

Like many other public health professionals before him, public health was something that seemed to find him – not the other way around. In fact, teaching English in Mexico was not something he planned to do either. If anything, it was a means of staying in Mexico. A couple of months turned into four years until he felt that it was time to return to the States to be closer to his family. There was only one problem.

“I didn’t know what I was going to do professionally,” he says.

The idea to try public health was partly inspired by immediate members of his family: his father, a psychiatrist, and his brother, an ER doctor. The “potential impact” drew Brett to the field and In 2004 Brett began his career in public health, enrolling in a Master of Public Health degree with a concentration in health education at the University of South Florida.

When Brett first started his public health career he didn’t have a clear idea of what exactly he wanted to do. He took on part time positions in Florida, mainly working as an intern for places such as the Collier County Health Department and the Hillsborough County Health Department. That changed when he learned about the HSHPS Graduate Fellowship Training Program through USF.

“The opportunity I had at HSHPS is what got me to work at the CDC. It led to finding places at the CDC I could work at and learn more. It was formative in the sense in that it allowed me to develop a career there and eventually become a government full time employee.”

“It evolved,” he says as he explains how he came to decide on a specific public health career track. “The opportunity to come to CDC was fundamental in that.”

In the summer of 2006, Brett began his traineeship as an HSHPS/CDC fellow in Atlanta, Georgia, where he worked on the CDC Financial Management Office Public Health Policy team. He assisted in preparing for two Congressional hearings, including helping draft CDC's written testimony, and otherwise providing appropriations analysis and communications support. In September of the same year, he moved to CDC's Division of Adult and Community Health P&E team. There, he provided policy, communications, and programmatic support to the division, including budget formulation (development of CDC's annual discretionary budget proposal), writing an internal briefing book.

Through his time as an HSHPS fellow, Brett "got snapshots of the process" working as a government employee.

"The opportunity I had at HSHPS is what got me to work at the CDC. It led to finding places at the CDC I could work at and learn more," he says. "It was formative in the sense in that it allowed me to develop a career there and eventually become a government full time employee."

Today, Brett's role at the CDC has evolved from health promotion-focused to budget and policy-focused. His entire office tackles preparing budget formulation documents for the Department of Health and Human Services leading to the release of the annual CDC Congressional Justification supporting the President's Budget.

He advises students looking into the health professions to be open, especially when considering public health.

"Public health is a fascinating field and it gives you a lot of opportunities to do different things," says Brett. "There are a lot of different venues you can be working in, areas of expertise you can delve into. There's a certain amount of open-endedness, which I personally am attracted to. It all creates a lot of interesting opportunities."