



A Day in the Life of a Public Health employee

Each April communities around the country join together to celebrate the many contributions of our local public health departments. Public health is a part of our everyday lives, from the water we drink and the air we breathe to the vaccines that help us stay healthy. Here is a glimpse of a Day in the Life of one dedicated Mid-Michigan District Health Department employee who proudly serves the residents of Montcalm County each and every day.

Meet Laura

Name: Laura Grosskopf, R.N.

Occupation: Public Health Nurse

Employer: Mid-Michigan District Health Department, Montcalm Office



I have been a public health nurse with MMDHD for almost 19 years. Every day is different and every day is a challenge. I can honestly say that I am constantly learning something new.

Today I began by visiting six Amish families in an effort to bring their vaccinations up-to-date. My main goal is to vaccinate newborns, but also to make sure the entire family is up-to-date. In addition to vaccinating newborns and young children, I also vaccinated several adults who needed tetanus boosters.

I reached the office just in time to meet with one of my tuberculosis clients who is on latent treatments, which means he needs to be monitored for side effects once a month, either in his home or in our office. I talked to the client about any signs and symptoms he may be experiencing as well as his overall health. I will continue to meet with this client for the next 6 to 9 months.

I then took a phone call from a physician who had just examined a child with an elevated blood lead level. I contacted the child's parents to educate them on lead poisoning and discuss lead prevention. I let them know that one of our Environmental Health Specialists would be happy to speak with them about having their home tested for lead. I also let them know that the Early On program is available to monitor the development of the child. Since they were interested, I submitted the required referral.

The next hour or so was spent helping out in the immunization clinic we were having. We were extremely busy, but I needed to return to my office to take an important phone call. A resident was calling to report that her child had been bitten by their neighbor's dog. After gathering as much information as I could from the victim's mother, I then called the owner of the animal and reported the bite to animal control. According to the animal control officer, the dog had been vaccinated for rabies. The animal would still need to be quarantined and monitored for rabies, but because the dog had a current rabies certificate, it would not be necessary to start the child on rabies post-exposure medication.

Late in the afternoon I met with a client to give him his HIV and STD test results. Since the results were negative, I counseled him on ways to better protect himself in the future.

I spent the remainder of my day conducting epidemiological investigations (tracking communicable diseases). All local schools and hospitals must call me to report any "reportable diseases," including AIDS, chicken pox, Lyme disease, tuberculosis, whooping cough and viral hepatitis. I research each report, trying to track down where the disease originated and who may have been exposed to it. I then forward each report to Lansing, where it eventually becomes part of a national report. This allows us to get a snapshot of what diseases are present in our communities. I am currently following several strep/pneumonia cases and several crypto sporidium cases. Tracking reportable diseases takes up a great deal of my time, but it is very rewarding to know that I am helping to keep my community healthy and safe.