

**ENS Halie O'Brien
JRCOSTEP Summer 2015
University of Georgia
Environmental Health Support Center
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My COSTEP experience has been an invaluable introduction to the USPHS. I spent my summer in Albuquerque working under the direction of the energetic CAPT Richard Turner (did you know he invented WebCident and is a published artist?) with the Environmental Health Support Center (EHSC) of Indian Health Service (IHS). The mission of the EHSC is to develop and enhance the competencies of the IHS workforce.

During the time of my internship, the EHSC was going through a 'rebrand' and wanted to focus their methods of training on objective-based competency development. My major project for the summer was to develop interactive on-line training modules and accompanying infographics on various public health topics relevant to the people IHS serves. This experience was incredibly rewarding because it allowed me to go through the process of turning an idea into a functioning tool that can be used nationwide. I had the opportunity to take CAPT Turner's idea, study the science of adult learning, research and purchase new software, and develop modules on subjects ranging from plague to dental amalgam management.

I also was able to be a part of the development of a new competency model framework for environmental health officers. This involved several meetings with people from all levels of IHS to flush out the necessary competency sub-elements and design of this model. Some of my other activities included attending meetings on training course content development, meeting with programmers to work on our new website, and reviewing and editing the new EHO Survival Guide for new Commissioned Corp officers.

To gain experience in the field, I had the chance to participate in a rabies vaccination clinic where we vaccinated over 600 dogs in one day. I also attended the San Juan Day Feast of the Ohkay Owingeh Pueblo where I completed food surveys of vendors, and had the chance to witness the traditional Comanche and Buffalo dances (and have some really great food!).

Throughout the entire summer, CAPT Turner really took the time to mentor me in both the fields of public and environmental health, as well teach me about the Commissioned Corps. After having such a great experience with this internship, I am excited to pursue a commission after I graduate.