

ENS Corey Day
JRCOSTEP Summer 2017
Western Carolina University
Billings Area Office
Billings, Montana



My name is Corey Day, and I will be entering my senior year as an undergraduate at Western Carolina University (WCU) this fall. I am an environmental health sciences major. During my freshman year at WCU, I attended a presentation by Commissioned Officers of the U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) about what it is like to work with the USPHS. By the end of the presentation, I knew that obtaining an opportunity to participate in the JRCOSTEP was going to be my goal, and that I would focus my academic efforts to make myself as competitive as possible for an opportunity in this program. Last spring, I learned that my efforts had paid off, and that I had been placed in Billings, MT to work with Indian Health Service, Billings Area for the summer of 2017.

I primarily worked on the Crow and Northern Cheyenne Reservations, but I also spent a week in Fort Washakie, WY working on the Wind River Reservation. Projects I participated in were a mixture of environmental health, institutional environmental health, and general public health. My field of study provides me the opportunity to pursue various career paths, which made the varied work experience exceptionally valuable to me.

One of the first things I worked on was completing online FEMA training for emergency management. I took four online courses that taught me about the incident command system with a focus on healthcare facilities. Taking these online courses provided me with the opportunity to later participate in two in-person training courses spanning four days, where I learned about the implementation of the incident command system at a higher level. The course consisted of a mixture of lectures and group activity, which allowed me to work with some of the people from the Area Office, including my preceptor.

Completing these trainings qualified me to participate in an emergency preparedness mock drill at the hospital in Crow Agency, MT. This drill was based around a fictional scenario involving a bus crash that would send a large group of children with severe injuries to the hospital. I participated in the drill as an *observer*, occasionally being given the opportunity to offer advice on efficient incident command system usage for the scenario.

I spent many of my work days conducting respirator fit testing for employees at various healthcare facilities. These respirators are used to protect healthcare providers from patients with respiratory illnesses, like tuberculosis. Depending on the location, two types of fit testing were done: qualitative and quantitative. Qualitative fit testing involves the employee wearing a hood

and respirator, and completing various breathing exercises while a sweet or bitter chemical is sprayed into the hood. If the person tastes the chemical, the mask is not fitting properly. Quantitative fit testing requires a machine that measures the particles within the respirator while the employee completes breathing exercises. I worked alongside another JRCOSTEP student to complete many of these tests, and in some cases helped entire facilities become compliant with this OSHA standard.

At IHS healthcare facilities on the Crow and Northern Cheyenne Reservations, hazard surveillance rounds are completed biannually. I was given the opportunity to participate in a variety of these inspections throughout the summer at the Crow/N. Cheyenne Hospital, the Northern Cheyenne Community Health Center, the Pryor Health Clinic, and the Lodgegrass Health Clinic. We inspected a wide variety of departments ranging from surgical suites to medical records. The experience of these inspections was invaluable, as many potential careers in my field will require met to conduct safety inspections. The people I worked alongside had developed an eye for detail, and often found issues I would have never thought to look for. This experience really helped familiarize me with the inspection process and its nuances.

I worked two weekends this summer, both of which were to complete inspections of temporary food vendors at powwows on the Crow and Northern Cheyenne Reservations. The powwows are annual events to celebrate Native American heritage and culture. Many of those in attendance are elderly or quite young, which creates a population with a high susceptibility to foodborne diseases. Temporary food vendor operations are typically small, and very hot. Such conditions provide more opportunities for cross-contamination of foods, poor temperature control of potentially hazardous foods like poultry, and poor sanitation. Our inspections ensured each food vendor provided food products that were safe for consumption.

My experience as a JRCOSTEP was invaluable. When I applied for this position, I had no idea where I might end up, or even that Billings, MT existed. Having had a chance to reflect on my experiences, I can now say that I am very thankful that I was placed here. I have gotten to meet so many different people working on three different reservations, and hearing about their experiences working with Indian Health Service and the U.S. Public Health Service gave me new perspectives on potential careers I could pursue. I have also gained valuable life experience by traveling far from home and exploring a different part of the United States. I feel confident that this experience will play an important role in shaping my future as I move into the professional world. I would certainly encourage anyone who is eligible to apply to become a JRCOSTEP.



Conducting respirator fits tests with ENS Abby Dalsin, JRCOSTEP, Ft. Washakie, WY