

Internship Guidance Document

TOMPKINS COUNTY WHOLE HEALTH
OCTOBER 2024

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Changes to the Internship Program: October 2024

In response to valuable feedback from both staff and students, Whole Health is implementing some updates to our internship program. While the core experience will remain the same, **we are shifting from a 'rolling' application process to a more structured model where interns will be accepted only at the start of the main academic semesters: *Fall, Spring, and Summer***. This change aims to streamline the process, reduce the workload for staff interested in mentoring, and potentially increase the number of interns we can onboard.

Additionally, we will be posting specific internship opportunities that students can apply to directly. The first of these will be an internship with our Whole Health Commissioner, Frank Kruppa. [More details can be found here.](#)

The application process will remain the same, with an additional question added to the application to identify if a student is applying to a posted internship opportunity.

The table below outlines the key timeframes for applicants. Students may apply ahead of the application timeframe, and should indicate on their application the desired semester for the internship.

SPRING 2025	
October '24 – December '24	Accepting applications
January '25	Applications up for review
February '25	Applicants notified/internships begin
SUMMER 2025	
February '25 – April '25	Accepting applications
May '25	Applications up for review
June '25	Applicants notified/internships begin
FALL 2025	
May '25 – July '25	Accepting applications
August '25	Applications up for review
September '25	Applicants notified/internships begin



Internship Purpose & Objectives

Purpose: Skill development, real-world experience, and contributing to the growth and development of Whole Health.

Skills to gain/build on:

- **Skill Development:** Acquire and enhance skills directly related to your field, such as data analysis, project management, or communication.
- **Industry Exposure:** Gain a comprehensive understanding of the industry's dynamics, trends, and challenges through hands-on experience.
- **Networking:** Build a network of professionals, mentors, and peers who can provide guidance and support throughout your career.
- **Team Collaboration:** Contribute effectively within a team, understanding team dynamics and learning how to collaborate towards common goals.
- **Project Contribution:** Make meaningful contributions to ongoing projects or initiatives, demonstrating your value to the organization.
- **Problem-Solving:** Develop your ability to identify issues, propose solutions, and implement improvements in real-world scenarios.
- **Professional Etiquette:** Learn about workplace norms, communication etiquette, and time management to navigate professional environments.
- **Adaptability:** Adapt to new situations, technologies, and challenges that arise in a dynamic work environment.
- **Feedback Integration:** Actively seek and incorporate feedback to continually improve your performance and skills.
- **Career Exploration:** Use the internship as an opportunity to explore different roles within the organization and identify areas of interest for your future career.
- **Organizational Understanding:** Develop a comprehensive understanding of the organization's structure, values, and mission.
- **Independent Initiative:** Demonstrate the ability to take ownership of tasks and projects, showing initiative and responsibility.
- **Learning from Experts:** Learn from professionals with experience in your field, absorbing their knowledge and insights.
- **Personal Growth:** Reflect on your experiences, challenges, and successes to foster personal growth and self-awareness.
- **Resume Building:** Acquire experiences and accomplishments that enhance your resume and increase your attractiveness to future employers.



Objective: Whole Health's vision for engaging interns from renowned colleges and universities to reflect a commitment to fostering a mutually beneficial partnership that drives excellence in public health and mental health services. By collaborating with these institutions and their students, Whole Health aims to achieve several key objectives:

- ✓ **Knowledge Exchange:** Whole Health seeks to create an environment where interns bring the latest academic knowledge and research insights from their universities, enhancing the organization's capacity for innovation and evidence-based practices.
- ✓ **Fresh Perspectives:** Interns should inject new perspectives and ideas into Whole Health's operations. Their diverse backgrounds and academic experiences contribute to creative problem-solving and novel approaches to challenges.
- ✓ **Talent Pipeline:** The collaboration with colleges and universities serves as a talent pipeline, allowing Whole Health to identify and nurture promising individuals who may become future leaders in public health and mental health domains.
- ✓ **Skill Enhancement:** By offering a platform for interns to apply theoretical concepts in real-world settings, Whole Health contributes to their professional growth, helping them develop practical skills that are essential for a successful career.
- ✓ **Innovative Projects:** Whole Health envisions interns collaborating on innovative projects that address current public health and mental health needs. These projects may explore emerging trends, community engagement strategies, or technology integration.
- ✓ **Community Impact:** The outcomes of intern-led initiatives have the potential to positively impact the local community. Whole Health aims to leverage the energy and enthusiasm of interns to drive initiatives that improve community health and well-being.
- ✓ **Research Collaboration:** Whole Health recognizes the potential for research collaboration with universities, enabling the organization to contribute to academic advancements while benefiting from research-driven insights.
- ✓ **Professional Development:** Whole Health is committed to providing a nurturing environment where interns receive mentorship and professional guidance from experienced practitioners, enhancing their overall learning experience.
- ✓ **Promoting Diversity:** By engaging interns from diverse universities, Whole Health reinforces its commitment to diversity and inclusion, welcoming individuals from various backgrounds and cultures to contribute to its mission.
- ✓ **Long-term Partnerships:** Whole Health envisions creating lasting partnerships with universities, fostering ongoing collaboration that extends beyond internships. This could involve joint research projects, knowledge sharing, and continuous engagement.



Introduction to Whole Health

Tompkins County Whole Health is an integrated and empowered team, advancing a collaborative effort to promote prevention and equitably improve individual and population health.

Our Values:

Learning:

- We respectfully & constructively speak up and share our ideas. We encourage others to do the same.
- We listen when others speak and seek to understand their unique perspectives. We respect differing ideas with an open mind to find best outcomes.
- We take risks, try new ways of working, and we use mistakes as learning opportunities.

Innovation:

- We encourage creativity and welcome alternative points of view to create a safe space for innovation.
- We take initiative and actively participate in finding solutions to improve our workplace.
- We seek out opportunities to expand our impact & improve health outcomes for our clients & community.

Collaboration:

- We seek out & explore opportunities to collaborate with others, including internal co-workers & external stakeholders.
- We draw on the experience & expertise within our organization & break down organizational silos to provide the best services to our clients & community.
- We thoughtfully & intentionally share information or expertise to have the biggest impact across our organization & community.
- We work with existing and new partners to engage populations we have difficulty reaching.

Compassion:

- We are compassionate & embrace diversity of lived experiences with an open mind & without judgement.
- We treat each other, our clients and our community with dignity and respect.
- We prioritize the safety of our colleagues, clients and community members.
- We are responsible and accountable for our own self-care so that we are ready and able to care for others. We are supportive of each other.

Integrity:

- We give our best, strive for excellence, and assume the best of others.
- We are dependable and keep our commitment to each other and the community.

Interns would be expected to uphold TCWH values while working with the department.



Internship Structure

**Please note that exposure in some departments may be limited due to patient privacy. This is not structured as a clinical internship*

If you are interested in pursuing a clinical internship (*social work, counseling, mental health/public health nursing, etc.*), please contact: WholeHealthInterns@tompkins-co.org more information.

Duration

- Internship duration may range from a **few weeks to a full year**, depending on the preferences of the applicant, availability of internship slots, and on the number of credits being pursued.
- The specific number of weekly internship hours will vary depending on the preferences of the applicant and requirements of the program. At minimum, interns should contribute 4 hours per week. Interns are expected to report in person.
- Tompkins County Whole Health operates from 8:30 am – 4:30 pm M-F. The Green Street location operates until 6pm on Tuesdays and Wednesdays.

Start/End Dates

- Internship start and end date will be finalized with the individual applicant, but will fall into the general timeframes:
 - Fall
 - Spring
 - Summer
- Internships will range in credit value between **1 – 4+**, depending on the individual arrangements with each university.

Involved Departments

- Administration
- Health Promotions
- Children with Special Care Needs
- WIC/Maternal Child Health
- Public Health Nursing
- Mental Health Nursing*
- Environmental Health
- Mental Health*
- PROS (Personalized Recovery Oriented Services)*
- Vital Records
- Healthy Neighborhoods Program
- Community Health Worker Program
- Zero Suicide/Suicide Prevention
- Public Health Emergency Preparedness
- Communicable Disease



Intern Roles & Responsibilities

Day-to-day activities will vary significantly based on the individual intern. Some examples of potential internship activities could include:

- Attending and participating in meetings
- Assisting with fieldwork
- Leading or participating in project work
- Community engagement
- Working with data (entry, management, analysis)
- Working on CHA/CHIP or other organizational assessments
- Some administrative support
- Research and analysis
- Outreach
- Program implementation
- Communication and content creation
- Reporting
- Client intake/assessments*
- Individual and group therapy*
- Crisis support*
- Light case-management experience*
- Court liaison opportunities*
- Clinical documentation*
- Program evaluation

**Specific to clinically oriented students/experiences.*

There may be opportunities outside of the above activities as well, based on interns' interests or program requirements.

Additional roles and responsibilities of interns will include:

- Maintaining a timecard.
- Maintaining open and clear communication with supervisor and/or other team members.
- Complete any necessary departmental training.
- Turn in any required medical documentation, if necessary (will depend on the specific intern work).
- Complete a background check and fingerprinting (required for clinically oriented students only).



Expectations and Code of Conduct

Interns at Tompkins County Whole Health are expected to uphold high standards of professionalism, integrity, and respect. Your conduct reflects not only upon yourself but also upon our organization. By adhering to this code of conduct, you contribute to a positive and collaborative work environment that fosters growth, learning, and meaningful contributions.

Professionalism:

- Demonstrate punctuality by arriving on time for all scheduled activities, including meetings, workshops, and assigned tasks.
- Dress and act in a manner that is appropriate for the workplace.

Respect and Inclusivity:

- Treat all colleagues, supervisors, clients, and community members with respect, regardless of their background, position, or beliefs.
- Embrace and promote inclusivity by valuing diversity and creating an environment where everyone feels welcome.

Communication:

- Communicate openly, honestly, and professionally with team members, mentors, and supervisors.
- Listen actively and attentively during meetings and discussions, seeking to understand and contribute constructively.

Confidentiality and Privacy:

- Safeguard confidential information, including personal and sensitive data related to clients, colleagues, and the organization.
- Refrain from sharing proprietary information, internal discussions, and sensitive materials with unauthorized individuals.
- Abide by all HIPAA laws and regulations.

Responsibility and Accountability:

- Fulfill your assigned tasks and responsibilities to the best of your abilities and in a timely manner.
- Take ownership of your work, seek clarification when needed, and notify supervisors in advance if any challenges arise.

Adherence to Policies:

- Abide by all organizational policies, procedures, and guidelines, including those related to workplace behavior, data security, and safety protocols.

Adaptability and Flexibility:

- Embrace change and demonstrate adaptability when faced with new tasks, projects, or situations.
- Be open to feedback and willing to adjust to improve your performance.



Collaboration and Teamwork:

- Collaborate effectively with colleagues and contribute positively to team dynamics.
- Share knowledge, ideas, and insights to collectively achieve team goals.

Professional Development:

- Actively seek opportunities for growth and skill development within your internship experience.
- Engage in learning activities, workshops, and training sessions to enhance your knowledge and capabilities.

Ethical Behavior:

- Adhere to ethical principles and conduct yourself in a manner that upholds the reputation and values of Tompkins County Whole Health.

End-of-Internship Transition:

- Upon completion of your internship, ensure a smooth transition by providing necessary documentation, wrapping up projects, and participating in exit surveys if required.



Learning Objectives

Interns will work to achieve one or more learning objectives, in addition to any program or university requirements:

Public Health/Mental Health Knowledge:

- Gain a comprehensive understanding of public health and/or mental health principles.
- Explore the intersection of public health and mental health to promote holistic wellness in the community.

Data Analysis and Interpretation:

- Acquire skills in collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data related to health outcomes, program effectiveness, and community needs.
- Learn to use data to inform decision-making and identify areas for improvement.

Community Engagement:

- Gain experience in developing and implementing community engagement strategies to promote health and well-being.
- Learn effective communication techniques for engaging diverse populations in health initiatives.

Program Planning and Evaluation:

- Understand the process of designing and planning programs, including needs assessment, goal setting, and resource allocation.
- Learn how to evaluate program outcomes, measure impact, and make evidence-based recommendations for program enhancement.

Research Skills:

- Develop research skills, including literature review, data collection methods, and data validation.
- Learn how to critically analyze research findings and apply them to inform public health and/or mental health interventions.

Health Equity and Social Determinants:

- Explore the concepts of health equity and social determinants of health, understanding how systemic factors influence health disparities.
- Learn to address these disparities through targeted interventions and policies.

Effective Communication:

- Enhance written and verbal communication skills for conveying health information to diverse audiences.
- Learn to create clear and compelling materials for educational campaigns and community outreach.

Interdisciplinary Collaboration:

- Develop skills in working collaboratively with professionals from various disciplines within Whole Health.
- Learn to leverage diverse expertise to create comprehensive health solutions.



Leadership and Initiative:

- Cultivate leadership skills by taking ownership of projects, demonstrating proactive problem-solving, and showing initiative in seeking opportunities for growth.
- Learn to balance autonomy with teamwork and seek guidance when needed.

Cultural Competence:

- Enhance cultural awareness and competence to effectively engage with individuals from diverse backgrounds.
- Learn to approach public health and mental health initiatives with sensitivity to cultural norms and values.

Ethical Considerations:

- Understand ethical considerations related to health research, data privacy, and working with vulnerable populations.

Professional Development:

- Develop strategies for continuous professional growth, including attending relevant workshops, webinars, and conferences.
- Learn how to create a personal development plan for advancing your career in public health and mental health.

Adaptability and Problem-Solving:

- Enhance adaptability skills by navigating dynamic and evolving public health and mental health challenges.
- Learn to approach problems creatively, seeking innovative solutions to address community needs.



Mentorship/Supervision

Mentorship and Supervisor Match-Up:

Interns will be paired with a dedicated mentor or supervisor during their internship experience. The selection of mentors or supervisors will be thoughtfully determined based on several factors, including staff availability and the specific area of the intern's work within Tompkins County Whole Health. The aim is to ensure that interns are paired with individuals who possess expertise and experience relevant to their internship role.

These designated staff members will assume a pivotal role in supporting the intern's work, fostering professional growth, and contributing to a mutually beneficial experience. The mentorship relationship is designed to provide interns with the guidance and resources necessary to succeed in their roles while also helping them integrate seamlessly into the organization's culture and mission.

Supervisor Responsibilities:

Supervisors will actively support interns in various ways, including:

- Guidance and Mentorship: Providing ongoing guidance, mentorship, and professional advice tailored to the intern's specific role and goals.
- Facilitating Skill Development: Offering opportunities for skill development and enhancement by assigning meaningful tasks and projects, allowing interns to apply their knowledge and gain practical experience.
- Integration into the Organization: Assisting interns in becoming acquainted with the organization's policies, procedures, and values, ensuring a smooth transition into the workplace.
- Clinical Supervision: Providing one hour of individual supervision each week, or as required by the educational institution (for clinically oriented students *only*).

Regular Sync Meetings:

To maintain effective communication and ensure interns receive continuous support, interns will collaborate with their supervisors to establish a standing meeting time for regular **sync meetings**. These meetings will serve as a platform for various discussions, including project updates, progress assessments, addressing questions or concerns, and offering constructive feedback.

The purpose of these sync meetings is to promote a strong mentorship relationship, foster open communication, and provide interns with a structured framework for their professional growth.

Ex: in the case of a semester-long internship, a typical arrangement might involve bi-weekly sync meetings on Fridays, with each meeting lasting approximately one hour. This regular schedule ensures that interns have dedicated time to connect with their supervisors, share their experiences, seek guidance, and receive feedback on their work.



Training and Development

Access to Departmental Training Opportunities:

Interns at Tompkins County Whole Health will have the privilege of accessing a wide array of departmental training opportunities, enriching their overall internship experience. These training sessions provide interns with valuable skills, knowledge, and insights that are not only beneficial during their internship but also contribute to their professional development in their chosen field.

Please note that some trainings are only offered at certain points in the year.

Examples of Training Offerings:

- CPR and First Aid Training: Safety is paramount in any healthcare or public health setting. Depending on when the internship occurs, interns may have the opportunity to undergo CPR and First Aid training, equipping them with essential life-saving skills.
- Professional Development Trainings: These sessions focus on enhancing interns' professional skills, including communication, time management, and project management. They are designed to foster personal growth and prepare interns for their future careers.
- Narcan/Overdose Training: Given the critical nature of addressing opioid overdoses in public health, interns may receive training on the administration of Narcan and overdose response protocols, contributing to their preparedness to handle emergency situations.
- Training Facilitated by Staff: Tompkins County Whole Health is committed to the ongoing development of its staff and interns. Therefore, staff members may facilitate specialized training based on their expertise, offering interns unique insights into their respective fields.
- Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) Focused Trainings and Sessions: DEIB is integral to our organization's mission. Interns will have the opportunity to participate in training sessions that promote awareness, sensitivity, and cultural competency, aligning with our commitment to fostering an inclusive and equitable environment.
- And More: The training offerings are diverse and may include workshops on topics such as trauma-informed care, crisis intervention, data analysis, or relevant software tools. These trainings are tailored to meet the evolving needs of interns and the organization.

Benefits of Departmental Trainings for Interns:

Participating in these training opportunities provides several advantages to interns:

- Skill Enhancement: Interns can develop practical skills that are applicable to their roles and future careers.
- Professional Growth: Training sessions contribute to personal and professional growth, making interns more well-rounded and capable professionals.
- Networking: Interns can connect with colleagues and experts in the field during training sessions, expanding their professional network.
- Training on diversity, equity, and inclusion aligns interns with the organization's core values and prepares them to work in diverse environments.



Communication Channels

Utilization of Communication Channels:

Outlook (Email): Outlook will serve as the primary email platform for communication within the organization. Interns will be expected to regularly check their Outlook email accounts for important messages, announcements, and correspondence with colleagues, supervisors, and clients. It is essential to maintain professionalism in email communication, adhering to organizational guidelines.

Teams (Microsoft-based Messaging Platform): Microsoft Teams is a valuable tool for real-time communication and collaboration. Interns will use Teams for instant messaging, video conferencing, and team collaboration. It's a platform that fosters efficient and convenient communication among team members, making it essential for both individual and group interactions.

SharePoint: SharePoint is an integral platform for document management and collaboration. Interns will utilize SharePoint to access, share, and collaborate on documents, project files, and other resources.

Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, Excel: Proficiency in Microsoft Office applications—Word, PowerPoint, and Excel—is expected. These tools are essential for creating and formatting documents, presentations, and spreadsheets, which are often used for reporting, data analysis, and project documentation.

Electronic Health Record/Other health reporting systems as needed.

Opportunity for Additional Communication Channels:

Interns may also have the opportunity to use or learn additional communication channels, depending on the specific requirements of their roles and projects. Some additional channels may include:

- Project Management Software: Depending on the nature of the projects interns are involved in, they may use project management software like Microsoft Project or other specialized tools for task tracking, timelines, and project collaboration.
- Video Conferencing Platforms: In addition to Teams, interns may use other video conferencing platforms, such as Zoom or WebEx, for meetings and presentations with external partners or clients.
- Social Media and Public Outreach Tools: If the internship involves public outreach or social media management, interns may use platforms like Facebook, Twitter, or LinkedIn to engage with the community and promote organizational initiatives.



Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What does a 'clinical internship' mean, and who can apply?

- A: Our clinical internships are designed for individuals pursuing education in nursing, therapy, social work, or similar fields. Currently, these internships are offered exclusively at the graduate level.

Q: When are applications due?

- A: With the recent changes to our internship program (October 2024), applications will now be due prior to the start of each semester. Specific deadlines will be added to our website as they are provided by universities.

Q: Are remote internships possible?

- A: It is highly preferable to have in person interns and requests for fully remote opportunities are unlikely to be matched with mentorship opportunities. Please reach out directly if you have an extenuating circumstance.

Q: Are these internships paid?

- A: These internships are currently unpaid, but we aim to offer paid positions in the future. If you require funding, please consult your academic advisor for potential opportunities your school may offer or check the Job section of our website for other positions.

Q: When can I expect to hear back about my application?

- A: Applicants will hear back about their application as soon as a decision is made by potential mentors. To check the status of your application, send us an email.

Q: One of my references asked if they need to submit a written reference. If so when would it be needed by, or would you reach out via email?

- A: References will only be checked if applicants reach the final stage of selection for an internship opportunity (therefore some references will not be contacted at all), and references will not be asked to provide their own written reference. Our mentors will contact the references directly and have a short set of pre-prepared questions they will ask either via phone or email.



Contact Information & Application

With additional questions, please contact: WholeHealthInterns@tompkins-co.org

To apply, visit our website: <https://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/health/interns>

Follow us on social media: Instagram, X, and Facebook

