



**California Public Health Corps Training & Pathways Program**

# FELLOW SPOTLIGHTS

**JUNE 2022**



*The California Public Health Corps (CA-PHC) mission is to increase the workforce capacity of local health departments across California by providing training, support, and work experience for professionals from historically underrepresented and diverse backgrounds.*

## FELLOW SPOTLIGHT

# Munyaradzi Mahiya (Pronouns: He/Him)



LOCAL HEALTH JURISDICTION HOST SITE  
**Alameda County**



EDUCATION  
**UC Berkeley**  
**BA Political Science, Disability Studies**



HOMETOWN  
**Chitungwiza, Zimbabwe**

### WHY JOIN THE CA PUBLIC HEALTH CORPS (CA-PHC)?

I was born and raised in Chitungwiza, a small city 35 minutes outside Harare the capital of Zimbabwe. I moved to the US in 2014 to pursue higher education at UC Berkeley. Upon graduation in 2018, I moved to Alameda County, and stayed ever since.

Before my public health journey, I had been working for The Center for Independent Living, a leading disability rights and advocacy organization. However, due to COVID-19 I was laid off in 2020. I knew then I needed to acquire some technical skills that would allow me to continue working and contributing to my community. Fortunately, I found work in Alameda County through one of its community-based partner organizations, Eden United Church of Christ (Eden UCC), on their COVID-19 Response Team as a case investigator. During my time at Eden UCC, I fell in love with public health and soon after I found out about the CA-PHC (Pathways) program, and I knew I wanted to be a part of it because it meant more opportunities for training and responsibilities. So, I applied and got accepted!

### WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN WORKING ON?

At Alameda County, I float between two disease control departments as a Public Health Investigator. Between my co-fellow Abigail Cruz Reyes and I, we switch off monthly between Tuberculosis (TB) Control and Acute Communicable Diseases (ACD). For the month of June, I have been working in the ACD department, where I am tasked with independent case management and contact tracing for four diseases including, salmonellosis, shigellosis, Lyme, and Shiga-toxin producing *E. coli* (STEC). I am also currently working on the monkeypox management team, and I am responsible for contact symptoms management and vaccine follow-up.

In July, I will be back on the TB management team where I am tasked with case management, contact tracing, directly observed therapies, as well as other support duties. Essentially, my role and responsibilities in Diseases Control for Alameda County are to support the current Public Health Nurses.

My most recent project has been working on information updates of the Alameda County TB website, as well as other data collection projects for the TB program. My preceptor and supervisors have been instrumental in my growth at the county as they have availed opportunities for me and my co-fellow to engage in a wide-ranging tasks to learn the ins and outs of disease control, such as through presentations we have given to some staff across the county and our teams.

### WHAT COMES AFTER CA-PHC?

I am enjoying the work that I am doing right now. I would like to pursue more opportunities in disease control, particularly on the data side of the work. I have been exploring MPA and MPH programs and I think I will pursue that sometime after CA-PHC (Pathways) when I have a better sense of what I want to achieve in public health.

## FELLOW SPOTLIGHT

**Debbie Vang** (Pronouns: She/Her)



LOCAL HEALTH JURISDICTION HOST SITE  
**Sacramento County**



EDUCATION  
**CA State University, Fresno**  
**BS Public Health, Minor Hmong Studies**



HOMETOWN  
**Fresno, CA**

### WHY JOIN THE CA PUBLIC HEALTH CORPS (CA-PHC)?

I am from Fresno and graduated from CSU Fresno with a BS in Public Health-Community Health with a Minor in Hmong Studies. Prior to accepting the position in Sacramento for the CA-PHC program, I was a Project Coordinator for the AmeriCorps-Access to Cultural Healthcare (ACH) program hosted by The Fresno Center, a non-profit organization. I applied for the CA-PHC program because I saw it was a chance for professional growth in my field of work. In addition, it would allow me to apply my certification and unique skillset related to helping minority groups in the community. I was very excited for the opportunity to network with professionals and leadership in the industry all while gaining invaluable experience. I am a mother of four and saw only positives from the relocation even if it meant potentially being away from my family for a short while. I'm glad that was not the case, and my family was able to relocate with me.

### WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN WORKING ON?

I started my training with Sacramento County as a COVID-19 case investigator. Not long after, I had dual responsibility to also provide support to the Epidemiology Department to identify COVID-19 reinfection cases in CalREDIE (California's public health disease surveillance system). With the opportunity to cross-train, I was able to work as a COVID-19 Tester at the many different sites around the Greater Sacramento area by providing the community with COVID-19 swabbing instructions, collecting samples, and reading the results.

Currently, I serve as a COVID-19 Business Outbreak Liaison, reaching out and providing businesses with resources and support relating to COVID-19. I also had the opportunity to be part of the hiring committee for the Health Equity and Racial program. My responsibility is to evaluate and develop interview board questions, generate emails, schedule interviews, and correspond to candidate inquires.

Additionally, I'm supporting the Accreditation Unit in conducting research to identify the types of MPH programs, the concentrations, and the programs that are accredited by the Council on Education for Public Health for California, Oregon, and Nevada.

### WHAT COMES AFTER CA-PHC?

Post CA-PHC program, I hope to secure a permanent position with a LHJ, CDPH, or CDC. I am also considering pursuing a Master's in Public Health.

## THE INSIDE SCOOP

# Fellow Brianna Murillo recaps her CSTE Annual Conference experience

As part of the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) Healthcare-Associated Infections/Antimicrobial Resistance (HAI/AR) project, my preceptor and I were invited to attend the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologist (CSTE) Annual Conference held in Louisville, Kentucky (June 19 – 23). The conference offered us the opportunity to learn from other state and local health departments who have dealt with outbreaks of HAI/AR organisms.

Most of the workshops I attended were under the HAI/AR Program Agenda. Some of the presentations covered HAI outbreaks I've helped to investigate in the past, like *Candida auris* and carbapenem-producing enterobacteriales, while others covered organisms I hadn't heard of before, like aspergillus. A presentation I found particularly interesting, compared mortality rates in Carbapenemase-Producing Enterobacteriales by race. I hadn't seen HAI/AR data being analyzed by race before. It made me realize as more data is collected on HAI/AR, health equity needs to be prioritized when thinking of response measures.

Aside from the workshops, I got the opportunity to meet epidemiologists from all over the state, some being the only epidemiologist in their county overseeing all the disease surveillance. It was especially nice meeting the NACCHO staff who invited us on the trip. My preceptor and I got to have dinner with them and two other epidemiologists who were also awarded funding for their HAI/AR program. Overall, the CSTE was an invigorating experience that solidified my decision to pursue a career in epidemiology. For now, I'm excited to use all the knowledge I've learned from the conference and apply it to the HAI/AR program my preceptors are leading.

