

Unity Health Toronto, Centre on Drug Policy Evaluation

Li Ka Shing Knowledge Institute, 209 Victoria Street

Year 2 Practicum

September 2024 – April 2025

Practicum Description

The Centre on Drug Policy Evaluation (CDPE) is dedicated to supporting people who use drugs and their communities be healthier and safer. We do this by generating scientific evidence and sharing knowledge on the most effective policies, programs and practices to minimize the risks of drug use and maximize its benefits. We work closely with community members including people who use drugs, civil society, frontline service organizations, and governments at local, national and international levels. Our focus is on innovative research and actions that have a measurable positive impact on people's lives. Our immediate goal is to end Canada's overdose epidemic by developing an innovative, effective, equitable, and evidence-based national public health strategy that responds to the epidemic's root causes: the unregulated drug supply, ongoing impact of colonization and systemic racism, and the housing crisis.

CDPE's offices are located at Li Ka Shing Knowledge Institute. Staff worked in a hybrid model with a few members out in the community working full-time conducting research interviews.

This practicum does not include any clinical work. The student will potentially work on the following projects as well as other research project that may be applicable when they join.

1. **Cohort Studies:** The Toronto Disparities, Overdose, and Treatment (T-DOT) is a longitudinal cohort study of people who use drugs in Toronto. Community-based interviews are conducted for multiple sub-studies. Interviewers work full-time at various harm reduction sites where they recruit participants, conduct initial survey interviews and follow-ups and provide honoraria. The student will not be conducting any interviews with the population. However, they is a possibility for them to be on one of the sites (shelter) to liaise with interviewer in outreach participants at various sites and coordinate interviews. Student will be supporting research assistant but not conducting interviews. Work on the cohort studies will also include knowledge translation work. Students will be reading articles and create lay summaries and graphics. They will support the creation of newsletter to community partners and provide support with social media efforts. Further, student will assisting with study data management and organization
2. **Community Steering Committee (CSC):** is a national committee made up of community members with lived and living experience of drug use. There will be an upcoming event with the CSC that the student can support in planning and coordination. Student will also provide support in taking minutes and preparing materials for the committee meetings.
3. **Drug Checking Research:** The student will drafts manuscripts on research findings for submission to peer-reviewed academic journals using quantitative data from surveys with service users of Toronto's Drug Checking Service and lab-based analysis data for samples submitted to the service, as well as

other unregulated drug supply data. Performs statistical analysis on data (i.e., quantitative survey data, drug sample analysis data). Supports knowledge translation and exchange activities (contributing to peer-reviewed publications, study reports, presentations, website updates)

4. Overall operations of a research center: Support Operations Manager in their work and being involved in further making the research and work environment more equitable.

Practicum Requirements

- Immunizations per PHA Guidelines
- Travel by public transportation between home visits, or satellite offices, or community meetings, etc.
- Comfort working with the population being served
- Comprehensive report writing and documentation

Fields(s) of this Practicum

- Social Justice and Diversity
- Mental Health and Health
- Human Services Management & Leadership

Student activities to develop social work competencies:

Interprofessional collaboration:

- Attend staff/administrative meetings
- Collaborate on organization's projects
- Consult and collaborate with professionals from other disciplines
- Participate, liaise and represent the agency at community meetings or plan of care meetings or task groups

Indirect Service Delivery:

- Collect and/or analyze data
- Contribute to research and other organizational initiatives

Does your practicum require any previous experience?

- A firm understanding of harm reduction and the drug toxicity crisis
- Experience with analyzing and presenting research results, including developing manuscripts for peer-review
- Experience with other knowledge translation activities (i.e., reports, presentations, accessible materials)
- Hands-on statistical analyses experience using software such as R or SAS (not required)
- Fully proficient in the use of MS Office software
- Experience in the use of EndNote software is an asset
- Exceptional written and oral communications skills
- Demonstrated ability to work independently and collaboratively

Please indicate whether this practicum will be in-person, remote or hybrid.

Hybrid

Please indicate whether this practicum will involve direct work or a mix of direct and indirect.

Indirect

Number of practicums offered? 1

Field Instructor(s)' name and credentials: Layla Jabbour, MSW

Do you require a resume? Or resume and cover letter? Resume and cover letter

Accessibility Considerations:

- Will the student have access to a private space for notes or computer use? Yes
- Are there breaks between clients/patients/meetings? Sometimes
- Is the practicum considered fast-paced? Medium
- Is there a high noise level in the practicum? Medium
- Is the site wheelchair accessible? Yes
- What are the physical demands of the practicum? Possible travel to community sites and office may be required
- Are there any other accessibility considerations that potential applicants with disabilities should be aware of?

Students registered with University of Toronto Accessibility Services may receive appropriate accommodations for practicum settings. To register: <https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/department/accessibility-services/> or call 416-978-8060

If you are interested in this practicum, please send a cover letter and resume to alexi.sparaggis@utoronto.ca by 4pm on Friday May 10, 2024. Applications will be forwarded on to the site.