

# Justin McClain

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**Practicum Site:** Illinois Department of Public Health

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## ***Illinois' COVID-19 Response Needed Evaluation, But How?***



**Introduction:** This remote practicum was with the Illinois Department of Public Health based in Chicago, IL. The purpose of this practicum was to gather insight into Illinois' COVID-19 response from local health departments (LHDs) to better prepare for and respond to future public health threats. To achieve this purpose, two projects were completed during the practicum: 1) creation of an action plan for a COVID-19 response workshop and 2) creation of an electronic survey to collect data during the workshop.

**Methods:** Guidance provided by the CDC on how to effectively collect data on the performance of the 6 Public Health Emergency Preparedness (PHEP) domains during the COVID-19 response was used to create an action plan for the workshop. The plan entailed dividing 27 LHDs into 3 groups based on geographic location, tasking groups with identifying strengths, areas of improvement, and root causes for 2 PHEP domains, and creating an electronic survey to collect data during the workshop. The LHDs chosen to participate were part of the CDC's Cities Readiness Initiative.

**Results:** A two-day workshop will be held in Fall 2022. The workshop will utilize the action plan and electronic survey developed during the practicum to collect insight into Illinois' COVID-19 response and guide the development of the Cities Readiness Initiative COVID-19 After Action Report (AAR) and Improvement Plan (IP). The AAR and IP will be included in a final report to be submitted to the CDC by October 31, 2022.

**Conclusions:** The AAR and IP will ultimately lead to a stronger response to future public health threats in Illinois. With the emergence of new COVID-19 variants and the continued threat of future pandemics, continuous evaluation and improvement planning like the workshop will be crucial in protecting public health. This practicum provided insight on the process of developing program evaluations and the various challenges that can arise when working in the field of public health preparedness and response.