



SPECIAL ISSUE

# Center Briefings

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## Working to Promote the Public's Health: Georgia State Law Alumni at CDC

**Question:** *What is the common thread among over twenty Georgia State Law alumni who go to court, counsel clients, analyze policy initiatives and legislation, circulate global news, undertake scientific research, prosecute crimes, publish articles, educate non-lawyers about the law, develop new computer software, and consider how laws affect the well-being of everyone in our society – young and old alike?*

**Answer:** They all work for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the federal government's premier public health agency, which is headquartered in Atlanta.

Graduating from 1990 to 2011, they are all engaged in national and international efforts to prevent disease, injury, and death and improve people's health.

These graduates' diverse backgrounds and the varying nature of their work at CDC reflect the broad range of talents and interests that they brought to the College of Law as students. Despite their different job titles and work assignments, these Georgia State Law grads have a lot in common, from pride in their work to consensus on the benefits of CDC employment.

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**FRONT ROW, L TO R:** REBECCA POLINSKY ('07), HARRIET JETT ('99), MARK KASHDAN ('99), KIM DAMMERS ('97), SUDEVI GHOSH ('98), **MIDDLE ROW, L TO R:** DWIGHT WILLIAMS ('11), GAIL HORLICK ('90), **BACK ROW, L TO R:** JENNY SEWELL ('11), STACIE KERSHNER ('08), DONALD PRATHER ('11), LISA CAUCCI ('10), MEREDITH CARR ('10), SAMANTHA HARRYKISSOON ('07), **NOT PICTURED:** DONALD BENKEN ('97), ERIK BOEMANN ('07), LINDSAY CULP ('10), ABIGAIL FERRELL ('11), SIOBHAN MARY GILCHRIST ('06), SHERRY EVERETT JONES ('03), SALVATORE LUCIDO ('04), CAROLINE LAGOY SIRHAL ('11)





## Director's Message

We are pleased to publish this special issue of our *Center Briefings*, which is devoted to the Georgia State Law graduates who work at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta.

Spanning two decades of graduating classes from the GSU College of Law, these alumni work across CDC, and they reflect a breadth and depth of talent and expertise in the service of people's health around the world. Some engage in the traditional practice of law in the Office of the General Counsel, while others engage in many different kinds of law-related work, including policy analysis, research, and development.

These graduates were unanimous in their enthusiasm for their work, their respect for their CDC colleagues working in legal, scientific, and other disciplinary fields at CDC, and their dedication to helping promote CDC's mission to improve the public's health.

We are indebted to the collaboration of Paula L. Kocher, Deputy Associate General Counsel at the CDC Branch of HHS Office of the General Counsel, as well as to James Gathany, the CDC photographer who provided many of the photos in this issue.

Best wishes,

*Charity Scott*

Charity Scott, Director, Center for Law, Health & Society



## JDs at CDC

The nature of the work done by CDC professionals with law school diplomas can vary dramatically across different programs and offices at CDC. The Georgia State Law graduates who were surveyed for this story reflect the broad range of opportunities there.

"There are a surprising number of legally trained people at CDC," said Sherry Everett Jones, JD '03, a Health Scientist in the Division of Adolescent and School Health. "While a small number are practicing lawyers in the

Office of the General Counsel, most are in various programs around CDC."

Roles for people with JD degrees extend well beyond placements in the Office of the General Counsel. "There are over 100 law school graduates at CDC working in program and policy offices utilizing their analytic skills to advance CDC's public health mission," said Sal Lucido, JD '04, Acting Associate Director for Policy in the National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities.



**Sherry Everett Jones, JD '03, MS, PhD, MPH**  
Health Scientist, Division of Adolescent and School Health

*"It is surprising that few public health practitioners have any legal training, and yet law clearly plays an important role in the public's health. We have learned that education alone isn't the answer to improving public health."*



**Salvatore Joseph Jude Lucido, JD '04, MPA**

Acting Associate Director for Policy, Office of Program Planning and Evaluation, National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities

*"We deal with a wide range of public policy issues at CDC, and the policy and legal challenges involved are usually very interesting and cutting-edge. It can be a very rewarding career and have a positive impact on our nation's health."*



## Office of the General Counsel

The CDC Branch in Atlanta of the Office of the General Counsel (OGC) for the Department of Health & Human Services reflects the most traditional legal practice setting for law school graduates at CDC.

"I provide in-house legal advice and counsel to CDC management and staff on a wide range of public health, environmental, administrative, operations, and litigation matters," said Mark Kashdan, JD '99, a Senior Attorney with the OGC.

Much of Kashdan's recent work has been litigation-related, and he often works closely with attorneys in the U.S. Department of Justice on environmental, tort, and criminal litigation matters. He has worked on several high-profile cases, including the Deepwater Horizon multi-district litigation filed over the Gulf Oil spill, the Omnibus Autism Proceeding in the U.S. Court of Federal Claims (involving thousands of claims alleging vaccine-related autism), the World Trade Center litigation over personal injury claims by workers responding to the 9/11 disaster, and civil enforcement and criminal litigation related to the Libby Asbestos site in Montana – possibly the worst Superfund toxic waste site in terms of illness and death of workers and residents around the site.

Sudevi Navalkar Ghosh, JD '98, is another Senior Attorney in the OGC. "I provide legal counsel to various programs within CDC," she said. "I like that there is a lot of diversity in our work and a need to understand the underlying programmatic work of our clients." Ghosh's clients include the National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities; the Office of the Associate Director for Science; the Office of Surveillance, Epidemiology, and Laboratory Science; and the Center for Global Health's Global AIDS Program. Recently Ghosh has also been involved with healthcare reform implementation.



## Promoting the Public's Health

*Continued from page 1*

"Many law students believe that unless they are going to court or giving legal advice in a traditional law firm setting, they won't be using the lawyering skills they've spent years learning at law school," observed Charity Scott, Professor of Law and Director of the Center for Law, Health & Society at the law school. "What these graduates illustrate is how law school can prepare you for work in many different kinds of settings, including national and global policy work, program development, and research and training across a complex range of social and health-related issues, as well as for the more traditional practice of law."



**Sudevi Navalkar Ghosh, JD '98, MPH**

Senior Attorney, HHS Office of the General Counsel, CDC Branch

*"I very much appreciate the level of dedication of the people who work in the programs at CDC and the level of knowledge and expertise that they bring. It requires us to be on our toes!"*



**Mark Kashdan, JD '99, MPH**

Senior Attorney, HHS Office of the General Counsel, CDC Branch

*"I enjoy contributing to CDC's mission, assisting employees with matters that are largely foreign to them, since CDC is largely not a regulatory or enforcement agency, and my significant interactions with the Department of Justice on high visibility matters."*





**Donald Benken, JD '97, MPH**

Senior Public Health Advisor, Public Health Law Program, Office for State, Tribal, Local, and Territorial Support

*"What I like most about what I do is the diversity of the topics that I address and the knowledge that every day my work has the potential to make a significant public health difference and save lives."*



**Lisa Caucci, JD '10, MA**

ORISE Fellow, Public Health Law Program, Office for State, Tribal, Local and Territorial Support

*"I appreciate the collaborative nature of our work. The opportunity to interact with and learn from PHLP colleagues, staff from other CDC programs, and external stakeholders is one of the best parts of my job."*



# Public Health Law Program

Established in 2000, the Public Health Law Program (PHLP) in the Office for State, Tribal, Local, and Territorial Support is a relative newcomer among programs at CDC. Awareness is growing that laws and regulations can positively improve the public's health – for example, they have played key roles in such public health achievements as controlling and preventing the spread of infectious diseases, increasing childhood immunizations, and promoting workplace and motor vehicle safety.

"Although we are still in the early stages of understanding the incredible impact that laws and regulations can make on public health outcomes," said Donald Benken, JD '97, Senior Public Health Advisor with the PHLP, "as we continue to analyze population health from both science and law perspectives, we will be able significantly to improve our nation's health and reduce health care costs." Benken provides technical assistance to health departments and their legal counsel across the country about laws, regulations, and policies that impact the public's health. He is involved with developing strategies to strengthen legislative language in public health laws, as well as developing legal tools that state and local agencies can use on issues ranging from preparedness to respond to public health emergencies to improving programs related to chronic disease prevention.

Law school graduates with the PHLP utilize typical legal skills, often in research and policy settings. "I need knowledge of the law and legal research skills," said Lindsay Culp, JD '10, a Public Health Analyst with the program. Among other things, Culp is the

editor of the *CDC Public Health Law News*, which has a global circulation.

Given the breadth of public health law work at the PHLP, Culp laments that "I wish I could have fit more courses into my schedule while in law school, like administrative law, local government law, and other public health law courses."

The law graduates in the PHLP are not giving legal advice – that role is reserved for the lawyers in the OGC – yet they are heavily engaged in law-related work. "While all of my work is related to law, none of my work is legal advice," said Stacie Kershner, JD '08, an ORISE Fellow with the PHLP. Kershner works on various projects related to determining the potential impact of laws on the public's health, such as whether laws related to carbon monoxide alarms are preventing deaths and how understanding laws related to emergency preparedness can be critical to a successful future response to a public health emergency. "I started at the CDC on the first day that the H1N1 flu was announced in the United States," she said.

Lisa Caucci, JD '10, is the Georgia State graduate most recently hired in the PHLP, having started in August 2011. "I love the breadth of topics encompassed by my work," said Caucci, who has already been working on preemption issues, proper research methods in public health law, the potential impact of healthcare reform measures on public health departments, and privacy safeguards related to the use of social security numbers. "It's so rewarding to know that the work we do plays a part in improving the public health system."

## What Is CDC?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, headquartered in Atlanta, is the leading federal government agency with responsibility to promote the public's health, prevent disease, injury and disability, and ensure preparedness for public health emergencies.

It began in 1946 as the Communicable Disease Center (CDC). As the successor to an earlier Malaria Control in War Areas agency, its early focus was on controlling malaria by killing mosquitoes.

CDC is now a global leader in scientific research, investigation, and surveillance to address public health threats and challenges around the world, from infectious diseases and environmental hazards to injuries, disabilities, and chronic diseases.

An agency within the Department of Health and Human Services, CDC is organized into numerous National Centers, Institutes, and Offices. More than 15,000 employees work for CDC in over 50 countries.

Source: <http://www.cdc.gov/about/history/ourstory.htm> and <http://www.cdc.gov/about/resources/facts.htm>



**Lindsay Culp, JD '10, MPH**  
Public Health Analyst,  
Public Health Law Program,  
Office for State, Tribal,  
Local, and Territorial Support

*"I have had so many opportunities over the years to work with and learn from experts in various public health fields – the same people who are quoted in the newspaper or interviewed on TV."*



**Stacie Kershner, JD '08**  
ORISE Fellow, Public  
Health Law Program, Office  
for State, Tribal, Local, and  
Territorial Support

*"What I really enjoy about my work is being able to demonstrate on a broad scale that law is truly able to impact the health of a population. I have a statistical background and I like being able to 'do the math' in relation to law."*

## Law-Related Work

Gail Horlick, JD '90, is a Senior Legal Analyst in the Office of Scientific Integrity. Much of her work involves protecting individuals' privacy and confidentiality of their health data, thereby maintaining the public's trust. She analyzes the impact of federal legislation (such as HIPAA and FERPA) on public health practice and research.

"I respond to approximately 100 inquiries every year about legislation, data sharing, and policy development, as well as provide training on privacy issues across CDC programs," Horlick said. "As a member of the CDC Public Health Ethics Committee, I provide input on ethical considerations related to restrictions on travelers with communicable diseases." One year she testified before a subcommittee of the National Committee on Vital Health and Statistics on the impact of federal privacy law on school entry for children.

Rebecca Polinsky, JD '07, Research and Practice Fellow, currently works on a joint project with the Healthy Aging Program and the Public Health Law Program. The project will produce a preparedness guide and web portal for legal and practical options and strategies for state and local entities to use in planning for and protecting vulnerable older adults in all-hazard emergencies.

"Preparedness is by nature interdisciplinary and collaborative," said Polinsky. "Working on this project gives me the opportunity to work with many different sectors: law enforcement, first responders, local governments, public health agencies at the federal, state and local levels, adult protective services, and attorneys who work in public health law, disability law, and elder law."

Meredith Carr, JD '10, an ORISE Fellow and Public Health Law Attorney in the Division of HIV/AIDS Prevention, spends most of her time researching and synthesizing statutes and regulations related to HIV prevention. "While I may not be engaged in the traditional practice of law, I'm able to put my law degree into use every day," Carr said.



**Meredith Houston Carr, JD '10**

ORISE Fellow, Public Health Law Attorney, Division of HIV/AIDS Prevention

*"The best part of public health law work is knowing that you are using your legal skills for the good of others."*



**Gail A. Horlick, JD '90, MSW**

Senior Legal Analyst, Office of Scientific Integrity

*"I enjoy working with so many different types of professionals in addition to other attorneys. The collegial environment and opportunities for learning and growth at CDC create an interesting, stimulating work environment."*



## Policy Work

Many law graduates engage in policy analysis and development at CDC. “The policy track at CDC involves analytical thinking,” said Harriet Jett, JD '99, who graduated in the first year of the joint-degree program in public administration at GSU (MPA '98). Jett is the Policy, Legislative, and Budget Team Lead in the Office of Policy, Planning, and Evaluation. “Typical duties of policy-oriented positions at CDC include management of issues, analysis of reports, technical legislative comments sent back to the Department of Health & Human Services, interpretation of budget formulation, measures and impacts, external and internal relations, and management.”

According to Jett, the policy track at CDC focuses on programmatic issues, while legal issues affecting CDC are referred to the Office of the General Counsel. “The policy track at CDC is more typical of a governmental affairs position,” she explained. “Policy positions are great for people preferring a team work environment.”

“My work does not involve litigation or advocacy, and is for the most part policy-research oriented,” said Siobhan Gilchrist, JD '06, a Health Policy Analyst with the Applied Research and Evaluation branch of the Division for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention. She estimates that

she spends 50 percent of her time analyzing legislation and regulations and the other 50 percent studying cardiovascular disease issues.

“I have a fair amount of leeway in proposing and determining the types of policy research projects I undertake,” said Gilchrist. For example, she recently submitted a grant proposal to perform a multi-state analysis of policy factors and barriers to enactment of laws related to community health and cardiovascular disease.

“I enjoy working in the fast-paced policy arena,” said Sal Lucido, JD '04. “Many of our activities require thoughtful analysis under extremely short deadlines, and I enjoy that type of challenge.” Lucido's work involves analysis of legislation and the development of policies related to birth defects, heredity blood disorders, and developmental disabilities.

Samantha Harrykissoon, JD '07, a Public Health Analyst in the Policy Research, Analysis, and Development Office, estimated that “85 percent of my time is spent on analyzing public health policy issues, and the rest is law-related.” Her work varies considerably, including analyzing the health impact, feasibility, and economic impact of high-level issues, developing partnerships, and providing technical assistance to programs.



**Siobhan Mary Gilchrist, JD '06, MPH, MS**

Health Policy Analyst, Applied Research and Evaluation Branch, CDC's Division for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention

*“Public health law is a growing field, especially considering the array of public health issues like climate change, health care access, an aging population, international health, and human rights.”*



**Harriet Jett, JD '99, MPA**

Policy, Legislative and Budget Team Lead, Office of Policy, Planning, and Evaluation, Office of Public Health Preparedness and Response

*“I really enjoy finding solutions to agency challenges and consider myself lucky to work with such a top notch workforce. My best days happen when we can take advantage of opportunities to use proactive strategies.”*





## Contract Work

Erik Boemanns, JD '07, who works for CDC as a contractor for Deloitte, is engaged in software design and development. He was the only graduate who characterized his work as "100% related to subjects other than law." Although he said that his JD "was more of a novelty" to his team than a specific requirement for his job, he thinks that his legal training has been beneficial to his software work. "I do find that my legal skills and training help in listening to the client's current challenges, understanding their goals, and designing solutions that meet their requirements," he said.

Dwight Williams, JD '11, just started working at CDC in November 2011, through Chenega Government Consulting, a contractor with CDC. As a grants specialist, he reviews grants awarded by CDC, particularly to ensure compliance with regulations. While not employed directly by CDC, he notes that there opportunities for CDC-related employment with outside companies who contract with CDC. "My company has hired many recent law graduates," he said.



### **Erik Boemanns, JD '07**

Contractor, Deloitte  
(technology consulting  
for CDC's OPHPR,  
OSTLTS, PHSPPO, and  
other programs/offices)

*"Because of my personal interest in health, medicine, and science, I enjoy helping my clients find solutions to their business and technical needs, which often involve important health issues."*



### **A. Dwight Williams, JD '11**

Contractor, Chenega  
Government Consulting  
(Grants Specialist for  
CDC Procurement and  
Grants Office)

*"Students should be encouraged to work in all aspects of the public sector, including public health. They should keep looking for the right opportunity."*





## Benefits of CDC Employment

The graduates expressed pride in promoting CDC's mission and satisfaction with its healthy working environment. "I love being part of the mission to better public health," said Gail Horlick, JD '90. Meredith Carr, JD '10, echoed the sentiment: "I love the fact that my work is going towards achieving a bigger purpose – it's all about forming policies that will decrease the new incidence of HIV infection and increase the public's health in general."

Graduates also emphasized the pride they have in working at CDC. "The best aspect of working at CDC is the reputation we have as a strong, science-based organization," said Sal Lucido, JD '04. "I find most people appreciative of the work CDC does, and that makes going to work every day rewarding."

Opportunities for interdisciplinary work are recognized as a stimulating component of work at CDC. "I particularly enjoy bringing people from various disciplines together and helping them gain a better understanding of each other," said Rebecca Polinsky, JD '07.

The graduates' respect for their colleagues' expertise and hard work is also apparent. "The people at CDC are incredibly talented," observed Harriet Jett, JD '99, "and this motivates me to find opportunities and solutions for better business."

"What I like most about working at the CDC is the dedication of its employees to have a positive impact on the nation's health," said Donald Benken, JD '97. "Every day, scientists, physicians, professional staff, and support staff contribute to an overall mission that results in making a difference in the health of people around the world."

Graduates also appreciated the healthy working environment that CDC provides. "We work very hard, but we're encouraged to have a good work-life balance, and there are no billable hours," said Lindsay Culp, JD '10. "Everyone here works hard and does a good job," said Carr, adding that "the stress level is much less than it would be at a big law firm."



**Samantha Harrykissoon, JD '07, MPH**

Public Health Analyst (Policy), Policy Research, Analysis and Development Office, Office of the Associate Director of Policy

*"I enjoy that my work is always changing, and I work on a wide range of projects, including policy analysis and recommendations and analyzing legislation."*



**Rebecca Polinsky, JD '07**

Research and Practice Fellow, Healthy Aging Program and Public Health Law Program

*"I would encourage law students to consider public health law, especially if they are interested in interdisciplinary collaboration. Public health is a cross-cutting discipline, and there is no end to the places it can lead you to discover in the law and beyond."*





## Other Law Graduates at CDC

A previous issue of *Center Briefings* featured six Georgia State Law students who were working at CDC while in law school (see *volume 5, issue 1, pages 4-5*). Four of those students have graduated and continue to work at CDC. They were not highlighted in this issue due to their coverage in the previous issue. They are:



**Abigail Ferrell, JD '11, MPA**

ORISE Fellow, Public Health Law Program

*"The health law program at Georgia State is an incredible asset to any student interested in pursuing a health law career, both for its great variety of courses and the professors' expertise, as well as for the wide health law community that it fosters."*



**Donald Prather, JD '11, PhD**

Scientific Marketing Specialist, Technology Transfer Office

*"I consider my job to be one-third law, one-third business, and one-third science. While it is not the classic 'public health law' side of CDC, it is definitely the practice of intellectual property law within the federal government."*



## Finding a Job at CDC

The graduates stressed the difficulty of “getting in” at CDC. “Anyone at CDC can attest to the difficulty in getting a federal job,” said Lindsay Culp, JD '10. “I had worked at CDC for several years as an intern, fellow, and contractor before law school, and I knew I needed to have a doctorate degree to be a more competitive candidate.”

Getting a law degree will not guarantee a job, but it can help. Several attorney friends had suggested that Culp go to law school at GSU rather than pursue a PhD. While in law school, she started working at the Public Health Law Program as a fellow and was hired as a federal employee shortly after that. “It is difficult to break into CDC without a demonstrated interest in public health, so students should consider pursuing an MPH degree or at least taking classes in public health,” she advised.

It also helps to network and to keep trying. While in law school and even though she did not have a public health background, Meredith Carr, JD '10, applied for an ORISE fellowship that she heard about through a friend who was employed at the CDC. “Networking is very important if you want to get on board at CDC – talk to your friends and keep your name in the loop,” she advised. “In time, your persistence will pay off.”

Although he had worked as a consultant for Ernst & Young immediately after law school, Mark Kashdan, JD '99, decided after a year to practice law. “I thought the CDC’s legal office would be a great place to put my JD and MPH to work and start my legal career,” he said. “I had interviewed for the position right after law

school and finished runner-up, but I stayed in touch and the timing was right the second time around.”

“Many positions at CDC do not require a JD,” said Stacie Kershner, JD '08. “However, candidates with legal degrees are often sought by hiring managers.” She also encouraged interested students to obtain a Master’s degree in Public Health. “Not having this degree makes it much more difficult to get a job at the CDC and restricts the types of positions available.”

Some of the law graduates worked at CDC before law school and characterized their law degrees as another step in an already established career. “Although my career path at CDC did not change with my JD,” said Sal Lucido, JD '04, “I think the law degree provides me with an additional level of credibility in the performance of my job.”

“I already had a job at CDC when I graduated from law school,” said Sherry Everett Jones, JD '03, “but as a result of my legal training, part of my official duties began to include law-related work.” Jones’s current work relates to surveillance of youth risk behaviors and school health policies, the influence of the built environment on the public’s health, and the intersection of law and public health particularly in the context of schools.

Many of the graduates participated in a fellowship program at some point during their CDC careers. “The CDC has several outstanding fellowship programs that can lead to a career in public health or other federal service,” said Rebecca Polinsky, JD '07. (See the side bar on Fellowship Opportunities on page 13)



### **Jenny Sewell, JD '11, MPA**

Public Health Analyst, Office of Policy & Planning, Office of the Director, Division of HIV/AIDS Prevention

*“My law classes were very relevant to the work I do. I also use the non-legal skills I learned in getting my master’s, such as strategic planning and organizational theory, and my knowledge of public health learned while at the CDC.”*

### **Caroline Lagoy Sirhal, JD '11, MPH**

Public Health Analyst, Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Legislation, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion

*“Getting a JD degree has enabled me to consider multiple perspectives - science, policy, public health - all under the framework of the law. Being able to combine those areas has been invaluable and has made me a more effective advisor to the programs with which I work.”*

*Photo unavailable.*





## Law School's Impact on CDC Career

Many of the graduates attributed getting their jobs at CDC to their Georgia State law school experience. "I am certain that my law degree was a consideration when I was initially hired," said Gail Horlick, JD '90, who had worked at CDC as a contractor before becoming a federal employee. "Law school taught me to be a critical thinker, a skill I frequently use to analyze policies or the potential impact of legislation."

Having a law degree has helped to advance graduates' careers within CDC. "The skills I developed at the GSU College of Law opened a multitude of doors within the agency that have propelled me to several leadership positions over time," said Donald Benken, JD '97. "I've had offers that would have never become reality without my law school experience." According to him, the most effective skills for working in the policy arena are those he went to law school to develop, including the ability to think more rationally, understand multiple perspectives, and engage in problem-solving.

The law degree can also signal professional competence. "In a science-based agency like CDC, credentials are very important,"

said Sal Lucido, JD '04, "and the JD certainly lends credibility to my position as a policy expert at the agency."

The graduates credited their Georgia State legal education for providing useful skills and knowledge for whatever their jobs are. "My experiences in law school served me very well because there was a strong emphasis on acquiring and using practical knowledge," said Sudevi Ghosh, JD '98. Horlick added, "I learned how to define issues and to communicate complex legal concepts clearly and concisely."

Some graduates emphasized that they had honed skills through their legal education, and others found their knowledge background enhanced by their law school courses. "I think the College of Law did an excellent job," Lucido said. "The experiences I had at the College of Law bolstered my analytical and communication skills." Siobhan Gilchrist, JD '06, added that "the academic training I received at GSU – particularly in administrative law, local government law, legislation, torts, and constitutional law – is highly relevant to the work I do."





Rebecca Polinsky, JD '07, gained valuable experience as a Health Disparities Fellow at Georgia State Law working with the Health Law Partnership (HeLP) after graduation. "I have no doubt that my direct work with disadvantaged and low-income clients at HeLP gave me a solid context for understanding how policy and the law affect vulnerable populations," she said.

The connections and friendships formed in law school can help one's career as well, for Georgia State Law graduates already at CDC can let their peers know when opportunities arise. "I wouldn't have even known about this opportunity if it hadn't been for my classmates," said Lisa Caucci, JD '10. "I am very fortunate that so many GSU law school graduates are already working at CDC."

The recent graduates also emphasized the value of the Georgia State health law program's reputation, faculty, and course offerings. "Many of the law faculty had worked with or knew CDC employees, and these connections were particularly helpful," said Stacie Kershner, JD '08. "GSU has an excellent and nationally-recognized health law program, which is a great bonus when looking for a job in the field."

## Fellowship Opportunities

Fellowship opportunities can be good options for new law graduates seeking to join CDC. As graduates emphasized, it can be difficult to get your foot in the door at CDC. Although fellowship positions are temporary and highly competitive, they provide an opportunity to gain valuable experience and exposure in the field.

Some of the fellowship opportunities available to lawyers include:

- **Oak Ridge Institute for Science and Education Fellowship (ORISE):** This fellowship program focuses on conducting research and developing solutions to CDC's critical missions. Current students and recent graduates from a number of graduate fields may apply. Fellows get a monthly stipend based on degree level, experience, and discipline. For more information, visit <http://www.oraui.gov/cdc/default.htm>.
- **Presidential Management Fellowship:** This competitive leadership development program aims to recruit and train future government leaders. Applicants may include recent graduates of advanced degree programs in any discipline. Fellows receive full salary and benefits and possible student loan repayment. For more information, visit <http://www.pmf.gov/>.

Other fellowship opportunities arise as funding and hiring practices allow. These positions are not always posted on the government employment website, USAJobs, so creating and maintaining relationships with CDC contacts can be critical to hearing about them.

Harriet Jett, JD '99, advises students looking for a career in public service to check out special program opportunities at least a year in advance and to not miss deadlines. "Keep in mind a Presidential Management Fellowship may not be right for you if you want a more traditional practice," she noted, and added: "People serve in public health and service to make a difference, and most are not as focused on starting salaries but in gaining an opportunity."



## Criminal Prosecutor Is Liaison to CDC

Kim Dammers, JD '97, has been an Assistant United States Attorney at the Department of Justice since 2002. In 2008, she was named to a one-year detail position at CDC.

Dammers split her time at CDC between the Office of the General Counsel and the Public Health Law Program. "Almost all of my work at CDC was legal in nature and directly entailed law-based analysis," she said.

"In the Office of the General Counsel, I worked on legal issues relating to computer security, quarantine, isolation and other emergency public health measures, and matters that might implicate criminal law," said Dammers. "In the Public Health Law Program, I concentrated on public health emergency law, the treatment of tuberculosis patients, and injury related to gang violence."

Dammers recalled her 12-month detail as an exciting time to be a lawyer at CDC. Among other things, the pandemic H1N1 flu outbreak occurred while she was there. "Both the OGC and the Public Health Law Program were heavily involved in addressing legal concerns related to the outbreak," she said.

These legal concerns included proposed prevention methods, isolation duration, vaccine distribution, and medical examinations of travelers suspected of H1N1

exposure. "Many of the legal issues that surfaced were new or seldom implemented, and each required significant analysis," said Dammers.

Now back at the US Attorney's Office, Dammers remains a liaison with the CDC on potential criminal matters. She reminded those interested in health law

that other government agencies and non-profit organizations also hire health law professionals.

"Besides the commonly considered public health law-related jobs," she said referring to CDC and other public health agencies, "litigation concerning health care fraud is a rapidly expanding field that the Department of Justice has made a top priority."

Dammers had high praise for Georgia State Law alumni. "I am constantly impressed by our graduates," she said. "Usually, I see them in the courtroom, and they are consistently well-prepared and capable litigators."

She also said that the College of Law "succeeds in preparing new lawyers to meet challenges presented daily in the practice of law." According to Dammers, "the best

preparation comes from rigorous legal education that pushes students to think deeply about legal issues, that demands clear and succinct writing and analysis, and that encourages students to articulate a logical, principled reasoning for a position" – the ideals to which she said Georgia State Law consistently strives.



KIM DAMMERS, JD '97  
DEPUTY CHIEF, MAJOR CRIMES, U.S. ATTORNEY'S  
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## The Future of Public Health

Every graduate encouraged current Georgia State Law students to consider pursuing public health work. "I don't think many students understand the breadth of knowledge that public health work entails," said Sudevi Ghosh, JD '98. "There are so many opportunities at CDC, from being a lawyer in the Office of the General Counsel, to working in policy development across the many subject matter areas, to doing broader legal research to educate both the public and CDC's partners."

"Attorneys at CDC work in a variety of settings and utilize diverse skills," agreed Gail Horlick, JD '90. "I would encourage students to focus on the skill sets required for the work rather than the position title."

Donald Benken, JD '97, has worked at CDC for nearly 20 years, and he has seen a significant increase in CDC's employment of law graduates over the years. "We are seeing nearly every policy office at CDC demonstrate in interest in employing law school graduates and

attorneys who understand the legislative process, can analyze laws and policies, and provide expertise as problem solvers – simply because they can think like a lawyer," he said.

"Public health offers another avenue in which legal training is valuable," said Sherry Everett Jones, JD '03. "Not everyone is cut out for or interested in practicing law in the traditional sense."

Rising interest in public health law at all levels of government is a good indication of future public health employment possibilities. "Having worked in public health at the local, state, and federal levels, I hope students consider state and local agencies in addition to CDC," said Siobhan Gilchrist, JD '06. "I encourage students to consider working for legislators or governors, state agencies, or municipal health departments and advocacy organizations to better understand federal-state relations and the myriad issues that routinely impact the public's health."



## No time to read the Web site? Watch the movie!

*Contagion* – a new movie by Steven Soderbergh starring Kate Winslet as a CDC Epidemic Intelligence Service officer – portrays a deadly disease outbreak and CDC's global efforts to investigate and control it. Parts of the movie were filmed at CDC, and CDC staff worked with the producers and actors.

"I think it's a fair and accurate portrayal of how the public health community might respond to a disease outbreak like the fictional one in the film," said Thomas R. Frieden, CDC Director, in a Sept. 10, 2011 essay for *The Atlantic*. "The idea of a contagion such as this is very real, and the CDC and the larger public health community work 24/7 to be as prepared as we can be."

For more information on CDC and *Contagion*, go to <http://www.cdc.gov/Features/ContagionMovie/>.



# Working with the law... To promote society's health

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## Join GHLN

Any College of Law graduate may join the Graduate Health Law Network (GHLN). Our graduates participate in social and professional networks, CLE programs, and the Center's Mentor Program for law students. Go to [www.lawandhealth.org](http://www.lawandhealth.org) and click on "Students and Alumni" and then "Graduate Network."

