

Jeffrey Shaw, MA, MPH
Director of Public Policy
Connecticut Association of Nonprofits

1. What do you look for in a resume?
 - a. One page. Beyond that, it is important to show your interest in a wide range of subjects, roles, and topic areas. I tend to like “memorable mentions” on a resume, such as a Coach or Mentor. Even if it has nothing to do with health policy (or the area you are pursuing), it shows leadership, responsibility, and the ability to work with others – highly desirable traits in the real world.
2. What classes do you recommend for students interested in your field? What skills are important to develop? (writing, fiscal analysis, public speaking, etc.)
 - a. I highly recommend Health Administration to get a thorough background on the importance of practical applications in public health. Another class that every professional in public health should take is Occupational and Environmental Health Policy. It was, by far, the best class I have ever taken (I actually enjoyed reading the textbooks) and highlighted many of the horrible business practices (lack of employee safety/training, environmental contamination, use of un-tested chemicals, etc.) of our favorite corporations and companies.
3. What keeps you motivated in your job day-to-day?
 - a. The simple reality that timing in life is everything. And in the public policy world, getting the right people together, at the right time, at the right place can be the hardest part of the job – yet the most rewarding. Those moments keeps the job fresh. (In my new role, I had my “ah-ha” moment when I waited 2 hours to speak to one legislator for a grand total of 30 seconds this past session.
4. What was your career and educational path to your current position?
 - a. My formula was completing the undergraduate degree, enjoy one last “summer job”, start a “real job” internship, and enroll in graduate school. Shortly after starting graduate school, I was hired for my first job and through multiple years, many friendships, I am able to work in a very rewarding field with some great people (not to say my former colleagues weren’t great, they are!).
5. What risks did you take?
 - a. I realized quickly that it is important to do what makes you happy. One of the things I enjoy is coaching (as mentioned above). I was able to move around my schedule so that I could coach football during the fall. Since coaching has nothing to do with public policy I was not sure how it would be received by my superiors, but it turns out, they were not only supportive, but interested in the box score. You just never know, so take a risk now and then.
6. What terms and acronyms do people need to know?
 - a. I laugh as I type this answer because despite working in health policy and completing an advanced degree in public health, I still “Google search” acronyms all the time- there are just so many – way too many! The more you work in the

field, the more you'll learn terms and acronyms without having to even think about it. Don't sweat it when you're first starting out.

7. What sources of info do you check regularly?
 - a. I receive daily e-news from CT News Junkie, Kaiser, and Governing. Nationally, I try to read the headlines of the Washington Post, Politico, New Yorker and New York Times. There is just too much information out there, so pick a few columnists you like that seem balanced and stick with them.
8. What's your best advice to students? What to do and what not to worry about
 - a. I would make sure that beyond good grades, you have at least two, preferably three internships before you start your "first real job". Here's why:
 - i. You will know quickly what you like doing and what you hate doing, regardless of the area (finance, politics, etc), which will prevent you from wasting time pursuing a job you don't want,
 - ii. You will (hopefully) have many options for references and letters of recommendation,
 - iii. You will have plenty to talk about in an interview,
 - iv. Beyond the Outlook Email System and Excel Spreadsheets, you might even work within an organization's system, and quickly identify areas for improvement to save time and money. Don't laugh, it's happened with one of my interns (and the same one was hired shortly after the internship ended).
 - v. Your resume will look better than your competing peers with (only) one or two internships.
 - vi. (I could go on, but you get the drift).

Good luck!