

Carmela Hinderaker, AB 2005
MPH 2007, Columbia University
Incident-Specific Planner, NYC Dept. of Health

Current job description

Mrs. Hinderaker is currently an Incident-Specific Planner at the New York City Department of Health, where she works on disaster preparedness.

Career arc

Before moving to the NYC Department of Health, Mrs. Hinderaker held a similar job at the New York City Office of Emergency Management (OEM). She also worked as a Database Manager at the National Center for Disaster Preparedness (NCDP) at Columbia University and with the Gulf Coast Child and Family Health Study, which surveyed Katrina Victims to understand the effects of Hurricane Katrina.

The relevance of anthropology

Anthropology has helped in her put things into perspective in the field of emergency management such as the importance of emic and etic perspectives on a single issue. Anthropology also helps one understand how agencies react to outside actions in order to move forward to a common goal.

Advice to undergrads, new grads

For public health students, she recommends gaining quantitative skills to balance out the qualitative aspects of an anthropology degree, as both sides are important in public health. She also recommends taking a GIS class because mapping is a good practical skill to have in the public health field.

For students interested in emergency management, she recommends taking the online classes on the National Incident Management System (NIMS) hosted by FEMA (<http://training.fema.gov/IS/NIMS.asp>) to get a foundation of understanding, looking into internships at offices of emergency management, or joining the local Community Emergency Response Team (CERT).