



*focus on*

## Missouri's Public Health Professionals

### **Samantha Chavez**

Medical Clerk

Newton County Health Department, Neosho



"I obviously love my job and what I do, I have been here for 23 years."

More than two decades of service in Missouri's public health system hasn't dimmed Samantha Chavez' love for public health or her desire to help people help themselves.

"I have always felt like we should treat others like we would want to be treated," says Chavez. "And I use that in my everyday life; home and work."

Chavez is a medical clerk for the Newton County Health Department in Neosho, Missouri. She provides support to the nursing staff, and describes herself as versatile - able to fulfill any of the clerical jobs at the health department. Chavez also speaks fluent Spanish, which helps her organization communicate more clearly with a growing Hispanic population. Newton County is currently home to approximately 3,200 persons with Hispanic heritage, according to US Census data.

Chavez says she is motivated by compassion and a desire to help people feel empowered.

"I help a lot of people from different walks of life and in need of help for different reasons," she says, "and will always be grateful to those who have helped me. Therefore, I enjoy returning the favor to those in need; if it's an actual problem that I can help them in or just simply smiling and treating them kindly."

Missourians depend on quality, compassionate expertise from public health professionals like Chavez - professionals at every level of the public health system, from front line staff to mid-level managers to leadership. Chavez recognizes the importance of her role.

"My daily work impacts the public health system in Missouri through the daily entry of data and people accessing records. Clerical duties are a fundamental role of the health department. It is especially important because we are the first face that people see when accessing the public health system."

A positive first impression creates an important start toward building a relationship with the clients Newton County Health Department serves. It sets the tone for the rest of their experience in public health. As the old saying goes, "You never get a second chance to make a first impression."

Chavez offers encouragement to her fellow public health professionals.

"Be kind, patient and considerate; listen to others concerns and needs and apply the knowledge you have to help others learn how to help themselves."

She urges public health workers to step up and be proactive for public health.

"Work with the public and fellow employees for the betterment of your community. Show up every day with an expectation that I can make a difference in someone's life."

Just like Chavez, every professional in Missouri's public health system makes an important contribution toward creating a stronger public health system and a healthier Missouri where every Missourian has the fair opportunity to choose a healthier life. Public health professionals are the very heartbeat of public health in Missouri.

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Missouri's public health professionals work hard every day to prevent disease, protect populations and promote healthier lifestyles in their communities. They play a vital role in the #HealthierMO grassroots initiative to transform the future of public health in Missouri in order to offer every Missourian the fair opportunity to choose a healthier life. To recommend a public health professional to be highlighted, email to Communications Coordinator Jaci McReynolds at [jmcreynolds@healthiermo.org](mailto:jmcreynolds@healthiermo.org). Learn more about the #HealthierMO initiative and how you can get involved at [HealthierMO.org](http://HealthierMO.org), on Facebook @[HealthierMO](https://www.facebook.com/HealthierMO), or on Twitter @[aHealthierMO](https://twitter.com/aHealthierMO).