

# Sarah Brill Thach, MPH

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## Education

**National Rural Health Association Rural Health Fellow**, 2022-2023. Coauthored policy brief, “Obstetric Readiness in Rural Communities Whose Hospitals Do Not Have Labor and Delivery Units” adopted by NRHA Rural Health Congress. Advocated for rural health policies with US Congressional representatives.

**Jim Bernstein Community Health Leadership Fellow**, Foundation for Health Leadership & Innovation, 2013-2015. Studied and piloted models of medical - public health collaboration to enhance population health. Received Distinguished Fellow Award in 2019.

**University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill**. MPH in Health Behavior & Health Education, August 1997.

- Studied community health assessment; program planning, management & evaluation; policy; popular education.
- Conducted study of health agencies’ organizational competence serving communities at risk for STDs.
- Designed, conducted, and evaluated parenting program to prevent children’s use of alcohol and tobacco.
- Conducted health needs assessment of rural Nash County, NC and presented results at community forum.
- Helped NAACP organize group of alumni to preserve community’s former African American school.
- Planned community forum to identify migrant farm workers’ and low income residents’ concerns and needs.

**Harvard University**. BA in Social Anthropology & Women's Studies, graduated magna cum laude, June 1991.

- Thesis on Appalachian identity: literature review, 40 interviews, and participant observation in rural WV.

## Experience

**Co-Director** (September 2022-present), Assistant Director (July 2018-August 2022) and **Concentration Lead** (July 2020-present) of Place-Based Health, UNC Asheville – UNC Gillings Masters of Public Health Program. **Teaching Assistant Professor** (January 2021 - present) and Adjunct Faculty (August 2018 – December 2020) of Public Health Leadership Program, UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health, and Associate Director of Community Partnerships, Public Health Programs, UNC Health Sciences at Mountain Area Health Education Center (May 2017-June 2018).

- Teach:
  - a. Core Courses: SPHG 701 “Leading From the Inside Out” and SPGH 702 “Post-Practicum Assignments & Interprofessional Education” (spring 2019 - present). SPHG 703 “Pre-Practicum Assignments” (spring 2023 – present). SPHG 713 “Understanding Public Health Issues” core course (fall 2018, 2019).
  - b. Concentration Courses: Developed PUBH 992 culminating experience masters paper equivalent (spring 2020 - present). PUBH 734 concentration course “Introduction to Place-Based Theory” (formerly PUBH 726, spring 2019, fall 2021 - present). Developed and coteach PUBH 740 “Implementation of Place-Based Theory & Design” (spring 2022 - present).
  - c. Elective Course: Developed and taught “WNC Skillbuilding” course spring 2020.

- Manage MPH students' service learning projects and recruit rural Western NC organizations to precept. Recruited and oriented 9 WNC organizations and groups to develop public health case studies about their work.
- As Concentration Lead, in conjunction with faculty, developed Place-Based Health concentration curriculum. Recruit, interview, and orient community adjunct instructors each semester, cultivate job opportunities for MPH students and graduates in conjunction with WNC public health and nonprofit organizations (fall 2018 – present).
- Serve on Gillings Inclusive Excellence Council and its Training Subcommittee (spring 2022 – current), Practice Coordinating Committee (fall 2022 – present).
- Co-led ongoing Boot Camp Translation community engagement process to develop community messages re. COVID prevention and vaccination among Latinx residents of rural Mitchell & Yancey Counties, NC (fall 2020 – spring 2022).
- Serve on Bernstein Committee, Foundation for Healthcare Leadership and Innovation (spring 2022 - present). Member of MAHEC-UNCA Health Policy Initiative (fall 2022 – present).

**Administrative Director** (January 2017 – April 2018) and **Director of Clinical and Community Outreach** (January – December 2016). WNC Rural Health Initiative, MAHEC.

- Oversaw budget, program planning, community health initiatives, and four staff.
- Developed rural teaching hub communities to precept high school, medical school, and medical resident learners. Recruited community advisory board, administrative manager, and physician champion per hub.
- Developed opportunities for learners to engage in community health improvement activities.
- Studied factors preparing medical learners for rural practice.
- Led 8-month Boot Camp Translation community engagement processes to develop rural community messages re. heart disease management (Enka-Candler NC) & long-acting reversible contraception (Mitchell/Yancey Counties NC).

**Associate Director** (July 2013 - December 2015) and **Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention Coordinator** (June 2011 – July 2013), Center for Healthy Aging, MAHEC.

- Designed, secured \$850,000 in funding, and implement initiatives to 1) combine rural community screening and primary care redesign to prevent heart attacks, 2) redesign primary care to better integrate geriatric care.
- Wrote curriculum and led 7-module training for low-wealth rural community members on advocating for policy, systems, and environmental change to promote healthy eating and active living.
- Convened rural older adult fall prevention network and replicated evidence-based fall prevention initiative.
- Convened county-wide workgroup to promote clinical-community linkages, focusing on increasing clinical referrals to community-based diabetes management programs.
- Served on regional hospital Western NC Health Network Triple Aim Council.

**Regional Consultant.** NC Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health, Office of Healthy Carolinians and Health Education. January 2005 – May 2011.

- For 21 counties of rural Western NC, provided technical assistance and training to health department-based health educators and broad-based Healthy Carolinians partnerships: taught community health assessment; program planning, management, and evaluation; coalition-building; health communication; meeting facilitation.
- Developed regional Health Equity Initiative: 6 rural Healthy Carolinians partnerships led community dialogues using “Unnatural Causes: Is Inequality Making Us Sick?” and planned systems change to address social drivers of health.

- Planned and led annual statewide conferences, quarterly regional trainings, and strategic planning retreats.
- Evaluated county community health assessments and Healthy Carolinians certification applications.

**Continuing Education Planner.** MAHEC Division of Regional Services. January 2002 – December 2004.

- Planned continuing medical education (CME) and public health continuing education, assessed continuing education trends, and studied Western NC hospital workforce trends. Assessed public health continuing education needs, recruited speakers, scheduled trainings, provided training, managed department budget.

**Coalition Coordinator.** MAHEC Community Health Resource Services. December 2000 – June 2003.

- Provided technical assistance to rural community health coalitions in Western NC: led interdepartmental team, assessed needs, coordinated MAHEC services, provided training, facilitated strategic planning retreats.
- Developed online database of community health indicators for use by health partnerships and health professionals.
- Co-facilitated quarterly meetings of staff coordinating health coalitions throughout Western NC region: assessed needs, provided training, arranged speakers, facilitated exchange of ideas, evaluated program.
- Developed annual Healthy Communities Institute to build skills for collaborative health initiatives.

**Education Director.** MAHEC Regional Primary Care Education. November 1997 – December 2000.

- Recruited, developed, and provided support for 230 community preceptors in 85 western NC practices.
- Co-authored 9 multi-format modules for community physicians re. how to teach health profession students, disseminated program across NC and nation, and trained preceptors throughout Western NC. Taught medical students “Promoting Patients’ Behavior Change” and video-precepted medical students to enhance their integration of office-based prevention and patient rapport.

**School Health Director** (September 1994 - July 1995) and **Coordinator of Medical Education** (June 1992 – August 1994). New River Community Health Center, Scarbro WV.

- Managed 4 rural school-based health centers.
- Provided technical assistance to 14 rural health centers starting school-based health centers: developed protocols, common Management Information System, and statewide evaluation; organized and spoke at four state-wide workshops; conducted site visits and helped sites troubleshoot on variety of issues.
- Directed two six-week health-promotion summer day camps for low income rural children, 1989-1990, 1992-1994.
- Coordinated rural primary care student rotations for a consortium of doctor’s offices, health centers, and hospitals. Worked with physicians, community groups, and university faculty, supervised student research and community outreach projects, planned and facilitated statewide conferences.

**Legislative Aide.** Seattle City Council. June – December 1991.

- Staffed Housing, Human Services, & Education Committee and clerked committee meetings. Planned infant mortality conference and city-wide adolescent health initiative with city-wide coalitions.

## Publications

- Turbyfill C, **Thach SB**, Batada A, Wallace E & Lanou AJ. (2022). Finding our Place: A narrative review to understand place-based public health. Manuscript submitted for publication.

- Spach NC, **Thach SB**, Dellinger CB, Ritter EQ, & Galvin SL. (2021). Using a community engagement approach to enhance contraception awareness in rural western North Carolina. North Carolina Medical Journal, 82, (6):377-383.
- Dewitt-Feldman S, Robinson HJ, **Thach SB**, Tipton L, & McCall S. (2021). Spotlight on the safety net: Bilingual, bicultural CARE health ambassadors in rural western North Carolina: A community collaboration. North Carolina Medical Journal, 82, (4):292-293.
- Lanou AJ & **Thach S**. (April 12, 2020). Op-ed: This is public health: a call for equity in the time of COVID-19 Asheville Citizen Times, [retrieved 7/14/21](#). Hodge B, **Thach SB**, Cox M, Galvin SL, & Parlier-Ahmad AB. (2019). Authors' Reply to "Training and Supporting Residents, for All Family Medicine Practice Settings." Family Medicine, 51, (3):291-291.
- **Thach SB**, Hodge B, Cox M, Parlier-Ahmad AB, & Galvin SL. (2018). Cultivating country doctors: Preparing learners for rural life and community leadership. Family Medicine, 50, (9):21-6.
- Parlier AB, Galvin SL, **Thach S**, Kruidenier D, & Fagan EB (2018). The road to rural primary care: A narrative review of factors that help develop, recruit, and retain rural primary care physicians. Academic Medicine, 93, (1):130-140.
- Galvin SL, Grandy R, Woodall T, Parlier AB, **Thach S**, & Landis SE (2017). Improved utilization of preventive services among patients following team-based Annual Wellness Visits. North Carolina Medical Journal, 78, (5):287-295.
- **Thach, SB**. (February 20, 2015). Op-ed: We're all accountable for making this world safer. Asheville Citizen Times, [retrieved 7/15/21](#). Also appeared as Campaign for Southern Equality 2/22/14 blog post: [Having the talk with my sons](#).
- Rasche K, Landis S, **Thach S** & Galvin SL (2015). The joys and challenges of caring for older adults by primary care physicians: Results of focus groups in Western North Carolina. MAHEC Online Journal of Research, 2, (1):1-9. Retrieved from <http://sys.mahec.net/media/nccha/joysandchallenges.pdf>.
- Langlois JP & **Thach SB**. (2003). Bringing faculty development to community-based preceptors. Academic Medicine, 78, (2): 1-6.
- **Thach SB**, Eng E, & Thomas JC. (2002). Defining and assessing organizational competence in serving communities at risk for STDs. Health Promotion Practice, 3, (2): 220-35.
- Langlois JP & **Thach S**. (2001). Evaluation using the GRADE strategy. Family Medicine, 33, (3): 158-60.
- Langlois JP & **Thach S**. (2001). Teaching and learning styles in the clinical setting. Family Medicine, 33, (5): 344-6.
- Langlois JP, & **Thach S**. (2000). Managing the difficult learning situation. Family Medicine, 32, (5): 307-9.
- Langlois JP & **Thach S**. (2000). Preventing the difficult learning situation. Family Medicine, 32, (4): 232-4.
- Langlois JP & **Thach S**. (2000). Teaching at the bedside. Family Medicine, 32, (8):528-30.
- Doyle D, Burkhardt MA, Copenhaver J, **Thach S**, & Sotak D. (1998). Health profession students as research partners in community-oriented primary care. Journal of Community Health, 23, (5): 337-346.
- Doyle D, **Thach S**, & Burkhardt P. (1994). Assignment, shadow, debrief: A teaching method for community-based clinicians. Academic Medicine, 69, (5): 427.

## Presentations

- Batada A, Thach S. Scaffolding "Community-Engaged Learning Experiences in a Graduate Public Health Program" session presented at NC Pathways to Achieving Civic Engagement (PACE) Conference, High Point, NC (February 2023).

- Robinson H, McCall S, Thach S, Tipton L. "Spreading Knowledge, Not COVID: Rural NC Latinx Ambassadors" session presented at the National Rural Health Association annual conference in Albuquerque NM (May 2022).
- Kiser S, Hodge, B, Thach, S. "Preparing Learners for Rural Interprofessional Practice" session presented at the National Rural Health Association annual conference in Albuquerque NM (May 2022).
- Thach S, Batada A, Macon T. "Acting on Our Commitment to Racial Equity: How an MPH Program Holds Itself Accountable." Presented at North Carolina Public Health Association conference in Asheville NC (April 2022).
- Thach SB, Ammerman A. "Creating COVID Prevention Messages That Change People's Behavior" presented to:
  - COVID Community Health Workers in Western NC (August 2021).
  - 2 classes of health promotion undergraduate students at UNC Asheville (March 2021).
  - School Health Ambassadors from six Western NC institutions of higher education: Brevard College, Mars Hill University, Montreat College, UNC Asheville, Warren Wilson College, and Western Carolina University (January 2021).
  - Mitchell-Yancey County CARE Latinx Health Ambassadors (November 2020).
- Johnson T, Thach S, Batada A, Wallace E, Turbyfill C, Macon T, Lanou A. "Applying Place-Based Theory and Approaches to Teach a Masters of Public Health Program and implement Public Health Initiatives in Western North Carolina" poster presented at the Interdisciplinary Association of Population Health Science annual conference, Seattle WA (October 2019).
- Johnson T, Thach S, Batada A, Turbyfill C, Lanou A. "The Evolution of Teaching about Place-Based Public Health in Western North Carolina" poster presented at the Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health annual meeting, Arlington VA (March 2019).
- Curran D, Thach S, Johnson T, & Kaderli B. "Teaching Community Health to Retain Rural Physicians" presented at National Rural Health Association conference, New Orleans LA (May 2018).
- Alexander S, Elio A, Lorenz-Miller L, & Thach SB. "Project ECHO® Helps School Nurses Connect" poster presented at National Rural Health Association conference, New Orleans LA (May 2018).
- Garcia I, Thach S, York C, & McCarthy J. "Perinatal Substance Use Peer Support & Organizational Training" poster presented at National Rural Health Association conference, New Orleans LA (May 2018).
- Sauer M, Bacon T, Presslein R, Cousins J, McQuiston P & Thach S. "Jim Bernstein Health Leadership Program: Growing local leaders" presented at National Rural Health Association conference, San Diego CA (May 2017).
- Thach S, Parlier AB, Currie C & Galvin SL. "Preparing learners for rural medical practice: 15 tips" poster presented at National Rural Health Association conference, San Diego CA (May 2017).
- Thach S, Landis S, Baker M, Smith E & Galvin SL. "Engaging community: 'Boot Camp Translation' grows medical practice" poster presented at National Rural Health Association conference, San Diego CA (May 2017).
- Huggins C, Galvin SL, Parlier AB, Thach S, & Landis S. "Annual Wellness Visits using team based care: Can clinical pharmacists and a licensed practical nurse help a primary care practice reach more older adults?" storyboard presented at Institute for Healthcare Improvement's 28th Annual National Forum on Quality Improvement in Health Care in Orlando FL (December 2016).
- Galvin SL, Descieux K, Thach S, Landis SE. "Cost effectiveness of team-based annual wellness visits." Poster presented at the Annual Meeting of North American Primary Care Research Group in Colorado Springs CO (November 2016).
- Huggins C, Thach S, Landis SE & Galvin SL. "A primary care nurse & clinical pharmacists provide Medicare Annual wellness visits and increase the rate of older adults receiving preventive care" poster presented at Western NC Rural Health Symposium, Asheville NC (April 2016).

- Thach S, Landis S, Baker M, Smith E & Galvin SL. "Rural community engagement to better manage heart disease: Changing the physician-patient relationship through Boot Camp Translation" poster presented at Western NC Rural Health Symposium, Asheville NC (April 2016).
- Thach S, Landis S, Baker M, Smith E & Galvin SL. "Community engagement to better manage ischemic vascular disease: Changing the physician-patient relationships through Boot Camp Translation" presented at Hartford Foundation 2015 Action Awards Institute, Washington DC (October 2015).
- Galvin SL, Landis S, Parlier AB, Thach S. "Enhanced delivery of Annual Wellness Visits using team-based care with clinical pharmacists and a Licensed Practical Nurse" presented to North American Primary Care Research Group Annual Meeting, Cancun Mexico (October 2015).
- Thach S & Baker M. "Health promotion in the healthcare setting" presented to University of NC – Asheville health promotion classes (October 2014, 2015).
- Thach S. "Accountable care organizations 101 & opportunities for public health" presented to Buncombe County health educators (February 2014).
- Thach S. "Population health priorities, activities, & sources of data" presented to Western NC Triple Aim Council (March 2011).
- Thach S. "Health education in tough economic times" presented at Western NC Public Health Association conference (May 2010).
- Thach S. "Evaluation: Starting with the end in mind" presented at NC Care Share Health Alliance workshop (September 2010).
- Thach S. "Finding and selecting evidence-based interventions" webinar presented at NC Community Health Assessment Academy (July 2010).
- Thach S. "Health education theory" webinar presented at NC Community Health Assessment Academy (May 2010).
- Thach S, Nelson-Weaver J & Rosner R. "Engaging the public in public health: Using 'Unnatural Causes' to raise community awareness about social determinants of health" presented at NC Public Health Association conference (October 2009).
- Thach S, & Reeve R. "Your health department's link to the community: The value of health educators" presented at NC Public Health Association conference (September 2009).
- Thach S. "Equipping NC public health workforce to conduct a comprehensive community health assessment" poster presented at national Public Health Information Network conference (September 2009).
- Thach S, McGaha K, & T. "Creating an infrastructure of collaboration: Tools and models from NC's Healthy Carolinians network" presented at national Association of Community Health Improvement conference (March 2008).
- Thach S. Keynote address: "Meeting Healthy Carolinians 2010 objectives" presented at NC Nurses Association conference (April 2007).
- Thach S. "Conducting listening sessions" presented at NC Community Health Assessment Institute (February 2007).
- Langlois JP & Thach S. "Preceptor development for busy faculty and preceptors" presented at national Society of Teachers of Family Medicine Predoctoral Conference (January 2000).
- Langlois JP & Thach S. "Preceptor development: Overcoming the obstacles" presented at national Society of Teachers of Family Medicine Predoctoral Conference (January 1999) and National AHEC Workshop (August 1999).
- Langlois JP & Thach S. "The hidden faculty: Developing community-based teachers" presented at national STFM Spring Conference (May 1999).
- Thach S, Eng G & Thomas J. "Defining and assessing organizational competence in serving at-risk populations" presented at national Society for Public Health Educators conference (November 1998).

## **Memberships**

National Rural Health Association  
American Public Health Association