

# COVID-19 contact tracing at Tarrant County Public Health leads to next step in alumna's career

2020 graduate Julia Aiken was finishing her MPH in Public Health Practice when COVID-19 hit and she began helping with Tarrant County Public Health's (TCPH) contact tracing efforts to track and stop community spread of the virus.

Aiken volunteered extra hours above her temporary work schedule, eventually joining TCPH full time as an Epidemiology Specialist managing a data intake team.

Every aspect of her work begins with people.

As with any virus or infectious disease, it was a lot like solving a puzzle, looking for pieces of information that fit together, to uncover a trail or series of circumstances leading from person to person.

While data does represent numbers, facts, figures and correlations, on a deeper level, it also tells stories. Data provides important insight leading to discoveries and ways of solving problems. It has the potential to save lives.

"How we manage the database really matters, as our work begins a process that other case teams move forward through the public health department," she said. "Taking the time to read each case carefully, looking for even the smallest details that might be important, gives follow-up teams a better perspective on where to go next."

"Public health prevention has to have a foundation of good data, and good data comes from seeing people behind the numbers," she said. "We do it because we care about the public, and we take the extra time to evaluate all the details that may be helpful to a case and the larger effort."



**Julia Aiken, MPH**  
**Epidemiology Specialist**  
**Tarrant County Public Health**