

Kersten is part of the first cohort of fellows, starting in January of 2019 and ending in May of 2020. During this time, Kersten worked in Olympia, Bellingham, and La Conner. Kersten feels accomplished of her ability to grasp all of the systems at the state and county level, including a subcontracting county system. Kersten was also able to start the conversation and gain community buy in for prevention science within La Conner. Kersten also states serving the La Conner community is a driving force for her current work as a Prevention Project Coordinator. Kersten feels she can relate to the communities she now serves, describing her role as helping communities navigate systems and helping those communities succeed through support, technical assistance, and leading people to resources. Kersten's favorite part of the fellowship was being able to see different prevention services at the county, state, and national level. Kersten enjoyed going to the National Prevention Conference and seeing what is working in other areas of the United States such as the community based and tiered approach to substance use prevention.

As a fellow, Kersten feels she grew her knowledge around community-based processes in relation to prevention work, which she applies to her current position with the Department of Behavioral Health and Recovery. Kersten also feels she learned how to be a leader for herself and as a worker. Kersten also expanded her skilled in public speaking, internalized and processed thinking, and her ability to explain prevention science to community members. Kersten also gained experience in multiple areas of state work through the fellowship program. The fellowship allowed Kersten to understand her personal capacity as well as how to evaluate and express what she needed from coworkers and her supervisors. This helped Kersten understand what she needed in relation to a work/life balance. The fellowship opened many opportunities for Kersten including her current position as a Prevention Project Coordinator for the Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery. Kersten had the opportunity to learn about behavioral health, specifically the continuum of care. She also found a passion for health administration, which she hopes to study in graduate school.