



### Government

Est. 2013

### Headquarters

Atlanta, GA

### CDC DSEPD Employees

700+

### Early talent hires per year

200



Division of Scientific  
Education and  
Professional Development

## Handshake's Advocates humanize the candidate experience for the CDC DSEPD



**400+**

candidates engaged  
with Advocates



**20.7%**

engagement  
rate



**3X**

increase in  
applicants

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Division of Scientific Education and Professional Development (DSEPD) emphasizes training and education across local, national, and global levels of public health and offers many full-time fellowships that span public health topics, including epidemiology, lab sciences, leadership, policy and management, informatics and data science, preventive medicine, and health economics. To increase candidate quality and improve program diversity, DSEPD leverages Handshake's Advocate role to tap into their fellow and alumni networks to build out a meaningful, 1-to-1 recruitment strategy at scale.



Before we started using Advocates, students would email us to speak with fellows and alumni; we had to serve as the intermediary and make those connections for them. Now, students can reach out to fellows and alumni directly through a safe and secure platform to learn firsthand about their experiences—and our Handshake Advocates can mentor them through the application process.

### Erin Black

CDC DSEPD Associate  
Director for Policy,  
Partnerships, and Recruitment

## Challenges

With limited resources and bandwidth, DSEPD wanted to increase the eligible, diverse fellowship candidates sourced from a range of schools and backgrounds. DSEPD wanted to take a more proactive, personalized approach to engaging with top talent and better leverage fellowship alumni in the recruiting process.

### 1. Save time while expanding reach

To reliably source top talent for their fellowships, DSEPD wanted to personalize their messages at scale to reach qualified candidates—despite limited staff, time, and other resources dedicated to recruitment.

### 2. Engage candidates early and often

To stand out among other employers and cultivate a robust talent pool over time, DSEPD wanted to rethink how they engaged with candidates—especially students early in their undergraduate studies to better identify and build lasting relationships with those considering pursuing a graduate degree.

### 3. Expand access in a meaningful way

To increase representation and bring unique perspectives to their fellowship programs, DSEPD wanted to engage current fellows and alumni from underrepresented backgrounds in the recruiting process so potential candidates could hear from them directly.

## Solutions

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Through Handshake's Advocates, DSEPD successfully facilitates authentic candidate experiences by connecting prospective fellows with current fellows and alumni. Advocates is a Handshake Premium user role that lets employers virtually introduce candidates to like-minded peers across their organization.

### Improving candidate quality through personalized outreach

Through 1-on-1 video chats or messages, DSEPD leverages Advocates to create an informal, peer-to-peer space to discuss the fellowship experience first-hand—leading to an authentic candidate experience and a more informed and engaged applicant pool.

### Spreading awareness through an early identification program

In addition to engaging eligible candidates, DSEPD also hosts virtual events for students who are currently eligible, as well as those who will be eligible within the coming years. This leads to long-term relationships that empower students to build their professional networks with DSEPD fellows and alumni.

### Prioritizing diversity to level the playing field

To foster a more inclusive, less intimidating candidate experience, DSEPD deploys Handshake Advocates to connect candidates to fellows and alumni with similar backgrounds and experiences. Advocates provide personalized and transparent insight into their fellowship experience and the application process.

## Conclusion

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With the help of Handshake Advocates, DSEPD now takes a more personalized, student-first approach to their fellowship recruiting—improving both applicant quality and diversity as well as the candidate experience.



Our data show that word of mouth has the greatest influence on our fellows' decision to apply for our fellowships. Now, we're able to connect potential candidates with fellows and alumni that have a similar background and can speak to their specific experience in the fellowship.

**Advocates allow us to level the playing field for candidates, especially those who are historically underrepresented.**

**Erin Black**

DSEPD Associate Director for Policy, Partnerships, and Recruitment

**Reach out to learn how to build a proactive recruiting strategy.**

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