



Career Guide
Office of Health Professions Advising

Healthcare Management

What does someone in healthcare management do?

Healthcare administrators impact the lives of many people by providing health planning services, organizational structure, policy formation and analysis, and asset management. Careers in this field require professionalism, leadership skills, and an understanding of the complexities of healthcare delivery with its specialized language, financial structure, and politics. Career opportunities include hospital and health system management, medical group administration, pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies, care management organizations, health information technology firms, supply chain companies, government/policy organizations, health insurers, and consulting.

How do I become a healthcare management professional?

To enter this field you should have strong written and oral communication skills, the ability to develop and present reports, the talent to work well with others, honest and ethical conduct, and significant leadership skills including tact, diplomacy, and flexibility. Although some undergraduate certification programs are available, these will only qualify you for entry-level positions in health administration. A master's degree is required for most positions in healthcare management. Essentially four degree pathways are common among students who want to pursue a position in healthcare management. These programs differ in name, but also in their curriculum. Generally you should look for accreditation by the Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Management Education (CAHME). A Master of Public Health (MPH) degree with a specialization in health management is one possibility. The central focus of an MPH is on the description of patterns of disease and on the development, operation, financing, and evaluation of population-based programs and the links between community and health. A Master of Business Administration (MBA) is another possibility. An MBA develops students' business management knowledge with an emphasis on accounting, corporate finance, and international business. Generally, however, only a few classes are available in healthcare management. A Master of Health Administration (MHA) focuses on the business and policy needs specific to healthcare settings. A Master of Public Administration (MPA) may also be used. Some schools also offer combined programs such as an MPH/MBA or MHA/JD (law degree) or MD/MBA. Still other schools offer a Master of Health Services Administration (MHSA) which also works well and is often very similar to an MHA.

What is the job outlook?

Since the healthcare industry is the largest in the United States and the second largest employer, jobs in the healthcare sector continue to grow faster than most other segments. Unlike many traditional management programs, graduates of healthcare management programs can find opportunities in rural communities and metropolitan areas throughout the world. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, medical and health services managers earned an average salary of \$81,160 in 2006. Senior healthcare executives with more experience can earn \$200,000 or more.

What prerequisite courses do I need?

Required undergraduate coursework varies considerably between programs. Most programs have few requirements as they are seeking an academically diverse class. Generally a broad background is useful including accounting, micro- and macroeconomics, statistics, ethics, social sciences (especially courses on diversity), communications classes, political science and public policy, and psychology (both introductory and health psychology). In general, solid oral and written communication skills are necessary.

What else do I need to do before I apply?

Observation of healthcare management professionals is a good idea. You need to develop a record of interest in healthcare issues. Most programs will require the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) or the Graduate Management Aptitude Test (GMAT) and a TOEFL exam for those whose first language is not English. You might also consider working toward a Certificate in Entrepreneurship and Innovation through the Burton D. Morgan Center for Entrepreneurship.

How do I apply?

Application is made directly with the programs of your choice.

Where can I get more information?

Association of University Programs in Health Administration	http://www.aupha.org
American College of Health Care Administrators	http://achca.org
American College of Healthcare Executives	http://ache.org
ACHE's Healthcare Management Careers	http://www.healthmanagementcareers.org

Programs in the region:

IUPUI	http://www.spea.iupui.edu/graduate/mha/
Northwestern University	http://www.kellogg.northwestern.edu/academic/health/aupha
University of Kentucky	http://www.research.uky.edu/gsbulletin/bullJul02/hlthadm.html
University of Michigan	http://www.sph.umich.edu/hmp/programs/mhsa.html
Ohio State University	http://sph.osu.edu/academicprograms/mha/index.cfm
University of Memphis	http://healthadmin.memphis.edu/index.html

For more information about health administration programs or your interests in the health professions, contact the Health Professions Advisor, Amy Terstriep, Ph.D., at 765-494-4747 or prehealth@purdue.edu.

Information for this career guide came from the above websites, United States Bureau of Labor Statistics at <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos014.htm> and those of individual schools.