



Public Health (M.P.H.)

Career Description

- Public Health Professionals have a mission to create conditions under which people can be healthy. Their primary focus is on prevention of disease and injury rather than treatment.
- Through organized, interdisciplinary efforts that address the physical, mental and environmental health concerns of communities and populations, Public Health Specialists work to make communities around the world healthier.
- Public Health Officials assess the health requirements of communities, prioritize needs, and create public policy.
- Many Health Care Professionals pair their training with a public health degree to address needs of their local communities including disease prevention and lifestyle.
- With over 20 major fields of study in 5 core areas, Public Health is a vast and interdisciplinary field and provides opportunities for students to apply their interest in helping people on a broad scale. Some of the broad areas of public health specialization are:
 - Environmental Health In this field, scientists are concerned with the safety of the food supply, water and air pollution and disease prevention. This field includes specialists in industrial hygiene, hazardous substances management, human nutrition, occupational and environmental safety, and toxicology.
 - Biostatistics & Informatics These specialists apply statistical and mathematical methods to the design and analysis of public health problems.
 - Epidemiology Epidemiologists track the distribution of diseases, how debilitating these diseases are, and how to prevent their occurrence.
 - Health Promotion & Health Communication Specialists in this field and health behaviorists have a comprehensive understanding of health in families, communities and populations. They are extensively involved in health promotion and education and may specialize in community health, behavioral and social sciences, minority health and health disparities and international health.
 - Health Services Administration & Policy These specialists plan, organize, formulate and analyze policy, and study the economics and finance of health services. A Masters of Health Administration is also available.

Additional Fields

- Emergency Preparedness A growing area in public health which trains people to create emergency plans for communities.
- Maternal and Child Health An interdisciplinary field that works on complex health considerations relating to women, pregnancy, reproduction, and infant and child well-being and how governments and communities can work together to advance the health of women and children globally.
- Minority Health & Health Disparities This field focuses on widening access to health care for underserved populations and studying how resources can be better distributed to care for the entire community.
- Global Health Uses an interdisciplinary approach to studying the health of populations across the world.
- Schools define these areas of study differently. When researching programs, look carefully at what is covered rather than just the names of the areas of study.
- All of these specialties can be employed on an international level as well.
- A doctoral level of training is also available for those who want to focus on research and teaching.

Becoming a Public Health Professional

- Most people in Public Health have at least a master's degree, usually Master of Public Health (MPH), but sometimes a Master of Science in Public Health (MSPH).
- Public Health degrees are usually interdisciplinary and incorporate a wide range of interests and abilities.
- Many programs also offer dual degree programs including MD/MPH, MPH/MBA, MPH/DDS.
- Certain jobs in public health require education at a Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH) accredited institution. Not all programs choose to become CEPH accredited because it is extremely expensive to do so. This should not be seen as a reflection on the quality of the program.

Job Outlook

- Since so many different careers exist within the field of public health, income, employment prospects and job growth are dependent on the particular position and the location.
- Jobs are available both domestically and internationally ranging from local health departments and industry to government laboratories including the Centers for Disease Control.
- Some jobs require extensive field work and others are primarily in an office setting.
- Average salaries range from about \$40,000 for community health workers to over \$80,000 for those in more technical fields or health administration.

Prerequisite Courses

- Undergraduate coursework is largely dependent on the areas of interest in public health.
- Usually a broad background is useful including basic sciences like chemistry and biology, ethics, religion, social sciences (especially courses on international settings and on diversity), education and communications classes, political science and public policy, statistics, and psychology.
- In general, solid oral and written communication skills are necessary and knowledge of a second language is always valuable.

Preparation

- Observation hours with a Public Health Professional is advisable though not required.
- Volunteering is also advisable.
- Study Abroad experience of any kind is becoming more common to show cultural competencies and a willingness to be open to new experiences.
- Take the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) aptitude test.

Applying

- Most programs require the GRE and a TOEFL exam for those whose first language is not English.
- Application is made through an application service called SOPHAS for participating programs.
- Direct application may be necessary for other programs that do not use SOPHAS.
- Attendance at a CEPH (Council on Education of Public Health) accredited school is recommended.

More Information

- [What is Public Health? http://whatispublichealth.org/](http://whatispublichealth.org/)
- [Association of Schools & Programs of Public Health \(ASPPH\) http://www.aspph.org/](http://www.aspph.org/)
- [American Public Health Association http://www.apha.org](http://www.apha.org)
- [SOPHAS \(application service\) http://www.sophas.org/](http://www.sophas.org/)
- [Council on Education for Public Health \(CEPH\) http://ceph.org/](http://ceph.org/)

Programs

- [Purdue University](http://www.purdue.edu/hhs/mph/) West Lafayette, IN <http://www.purdue.edu/hhs/mph/>
- [Indiana University \(IUPUI\)](http://pbhealth.iupui.edu/) Indianapolis, IN <http://pbhealth.iupui.edu/>
- [Indiana University](http://www.publichealth.indiana.edu/) Bloomington, IN <http://www.publichealth.indiana.edu/>
- [Northwestern University](http://www.publichealth.northwestern.edu/) Chicago, IL <http://www.publichealth.northwestern.edu/>
- [University of Cincinnati](http://med.uc.edu/eh/divisions/publichealth) Cincinnati, OH <http://med.uc.edu/eh/divisions/publichealth>
- [University of Kentucky](http://www.uky.edu/publichealth/) Lexington, KY <http://www.uky.edu/publichealth/>
- [University of Michigan](https://sph.umich.edu/) Ann Arbor, MI <https://sph.umich.edu/>

Information for this career guide came from the above websites, [Explore Health Careers http://www.explorehealthcareers.org](http://www.explorehealthcareers.org) and those of individual schools.