

- Public health professionals work to create conditions under which people can be healthy. Their 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. They 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 have a better understanding of health in a community context.
- With over 20 major fields of study in 5 core areas, public health is a vast field and provides opportunities for you to apply your 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 another option in this field).

### Additional Fields

- Emergency Preparedness is a growing area in public health that trains people to create emergency plans for communities.
- Maternal and Child Health MCH 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.
- 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 Using an interdisciplinary approach, global health analyzes 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 the names of the areas of study.
- All of these specialties can be employed on an international level as well a local level.
- A doctoral level of training is also available for those who want to focus on research and teaching.

## Education & Licensure

- 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 interdisciplinary and incorporate a wide range of interests.
- Many clinical programs offer dual degrees 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 an expensive process. This should not be seen as a reflection on the quality of the program.

## Preparation

- 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.
- Oral and written communication skills are necessary and knowledge of a second language is valuable.
- Observation hours with a public health professional is advisable though not required.
- Volunteering is advisable. Study abroad or other work with diverse populations is useful for showing cultural competencies.
- The Graduate Record Exam (GRE) aptitude test is required at many programs. The TOEFL may also be required for people who are not native speakers of English.

**Student Organizations:** Public Health Student Association, Purdue One Health Club

## Program Information

- The Association of Schools & Programs of Public Health (ASPPH) has an [interactive database for finding programs](https://www.aspph.org/program-finder/).  
<https://www.aspph.org/program-finder/>

## Applying

- Most programs require the GRE and a TOEFL exam for those whose first language is not English.
- Application for many programs is through an application service called SOPHAS.
- Direct application at individual schools may be necessary for programs that do not use SOPHAS.
- Attendance at a CEPH (Council on Education of Public Health) accredited school is recommended for the most employment opportunities.
- Early application is highly recommended. SOPHAS opens in mid-August. It is best to apply within a month of it opening.

## Fee Assistance

- [GRE Fee Reduction Program](https://www.ets.org/gre/revised_general/about/fees/reductions/) [https://www.ets.org/gre/revised\\_general/about/fees/reductions/](https://www.ets.org/gre/revised_general/about/fees/reductions/)
- [SOPHAS Fee Assistance Program](https://help.liasionedu.com/SOPHAS_Applicant_Help_Center/Starting_Your_SOPHAS_Application/Getting_Started_with_Your_SOPHAS_Application/03_Application_Fees)  
[https://help.liasionedu.com/SOPHAS\\_Applicant\\_Help\\_Center/Starting\\_Your\\_SOPHAS\\_Application/Getting\\_Started\\_with\\_Your\\_SOPHAS\\_Application/03\\_Application\\_Fees](https://help.liasionedu.com/SOPHAS_Applicant_Help_Center/Starting_Your_SOPHAS_Application/Getting_Started_with_Your_SOPHAS_Application/03_Application_Fees)

## Employment 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.
- Average salaries range from about \$40,000 for community health workers to over \$80,000 for those in more technical fields or health administration. [Explore Health Careers](https://explorehealthcareers.org/field/public-health/) provides some examples of how the various fields within public health vary in salary ranges. <https://explorehealthcareers.org/field/public-health/>

## Diversity Matters

*The public health profession needs professionals who look just like you, and who share your life experiences. Race or ethnicity, LGBTQ+ identity, disability, age, geographic region, socioeconomic status, social and cultural identity, and nationality all add to a richer experience for all students in the public health school classroom, contribute to the public health profession, and ultimately lead to better outcomes for the health of our communities.*

## Graduate Programs in the Region

- [Purdue University](https://www.purdue.edu/hhs/public-health/) West Lafayette, IN <https://www.purdue.edu/hhs/public-health/>
- [Indiana University](https://fsph.iupui.edu/academics/masters/index.html) (IUPUI) Indianapolis, IN <https://fsph.iupui.edu/academics/masters/index.html>
- [Indiana University](https://publichealth.indiana.edu/) Bloomington, IN <https://publichealth.indiana.edu/>
- [Northwestern University](https://www.feinberg.northwestern.edu/sites/cehs/our-programs/program-in-public-health/index.html) Chicago, IL <https://www.feinberg.northwestern.edu/sites/cehs/our-programs/program-in-public-health/index.html>
- [University of Michigan](https://sph.umich.edu/) Ann Arbor, MI <https://sph.umich.edu/>

## More Information

- [What is Public Health?](https://www.apha.org/what-is-public-health) <https://www.apha.org/what-is-public-health>
- [This is Public Health](https://thisispublichealth.org/) <https://thisispublichealth.org/>
- [Association of Schools & Programs of Public Health](https://www.aspph.org/) (ASPPH) <https://www.aspph.org/>
- [American Public Health Association](https://www.apha.org) (APHA) <https://www.apha.org>
- [SOPHAS](https://sophas.org/) (application service) <https://sophas.org/>
- [Council on Education for Public Health](https://ceph.org/) (CEPH) <https://ceph.org/>

## Other Careers to Consider

Health Administration · Genetic Counseling · Social Work · Human Donation Science

## *Preparing for your Giant Leap*

[purdue.edu/preprofessional](https://purdue.edu/preprofessional)