

Careers in Public Health



Behavioral Sciences/Health Education

Stopping the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, such as herpes and HIV/AIDS; helping youth recognize the dangers of binge drinking; and, promoting seatbelt use. Behavioral Science/Health Education focuses on ways that encourage people to make healthy choices. This includes the development of community-wide education programs that range from promoting healthy lifestyles to preventing disease and injury, to researching complex health issues. Job titles may include, Health Educator or Mental Health Researcher.

Biostatistics

Estimating the number of deaths from gun violence or looking at trends in drunk driving injuries by using math and science is the study of biostatistics. Biostatistics uses data analysis to determine the cause of disease and injuries, as well as to identify health trends within communities. This field entails collecting and studying information, forecasting scenarios, and making reliable conclusions. Job titles may include, Biostatistician.

Environmental Health

The air we breathe; the water we drink; the complex interactions between human genetics and our surroundings. These environmental risk factors can cause diseases such as asthma, cancer, and food poisoning. Environmental health studies the impact of our surroundings on our health. Job titles may include, Environmental Research Analyst or Federal Environmentalist.

Epidemiology

When food poisoning or an influenza outbreak attacks a community, the "disease detectives" or epidemiologists are asked to investigate the cause of disease and control its spread. Epidemiologists do fieldwork to determine what causes disease or injury, what the risks are, who is at risk, and how to prevent further incidences. They understand the demographic and social trends upon disease and injury. The initial discovery and containment of an outbreak, such as West Nile virus, often comes from epidemiologists. Job titles may include, Research Epidemiologist or Pharmacoepidemiologist.

Health Services Administration

Managing the database at a school clinic; developing budgets for a health department; creating policies for health insurance companies; and, directing hospital services all depend on health administrators. The field of health services administration combines politics, business, and science in managing the human and fiscal resources needed to deliver effective public health services. Job titles may include, Corporate Medical Director or Hospital Administrator.

Maternal and Child Health

Providing information and access to birth control; promoting the health of a pregnant woman and an unborn child; and dispensing vaccinations to children are part of maternal and child health. Professionals in maternal and child health improve the public health delivery systems specifically for women, children, and their families through advocacy, education, and research. Job titles may include, Reproductive Health Specialist or Public Health Coordinator.

Nutrition

Promoting healthy eating and regular exercise; researching the effect of diet on the elderly; teaching the dangers of overeating and overdiets are the responsibility of public health nutritionists. This field examines how food and nutrients affect the wellness and lifestyle of population. Nutrition encompasses the combination of education and science to promote health and disease prevention. Job titles may include, Nutritionist or Registered Dietician.

International / Global Health

Addressing health concerns from a global perspective and encompasses all areas of public health (e.g., biostatistics, epidemiology, nutrition, maternal and child health, etc.). International health professionals address health concerns among different cultures in countries worldwide. Job titles may include, International HIV Specialist or Tropical Disease Specialist.

Public Health Laboratory Practice

Public health laboratory professionals perform tests on biological and environmental samples in order to diagnose, prevent, treat, and control infectious diseases in communities, to ensure the safety of our food, and water, to screen for the presence of certain diseases within communities and to respond to public health emergencies, like bioterrorism.

Public Health Policy

Analyzing the impact of seat belt laws on traffic deaths; monitoring legislative activity on a bill that limits malpractice settlements; advocating for funding for a teen anti-smoking campaign. Professionals in public health policy work to improve the public's health through legislative action at the local, state, and federal levels. Job titles may include, Legislative Policy Advisor or Management Policy Advisor.

Public Health Practice

Public health is an interdisciplinary field and professionals in many disciplines such as nursing, medicine, veterinary medicine, dentistry, and pharmacy routinely deal with public health issues. A degree in public health practice enables clinicians to apply public health principles to improve their practice. Job titles may include, Public Health Dentist or Academic Nurse Leader.

Resources

- UNC Gillings Program Serach Database: sph.unc.edu/gps
- The American Public Health Association: www.apha.org
- The Association of Schools & Programs of Public Health: www.aspph.org
- Health Related Careers: www.explorehealthcareers.org
- Partners in Information Access for the Public Health Workforce: www.phpartners.org
- American Journal of Public Health: ajph.aphapublications.org
- Careers in Public Health: www.careersinpublichealth.net