

# EXPLORING: PUBLIC HEALTH

## Overview

Public Health is the practice of preventing disease and promoting good health within groups of people, from small communities to entire countries. Public health professionals rely on policy and research strategies to understand issues such as infant mortality and chronic disease in particular populations and produce change.

## Types of Careers

### Epidemiologist

- Study of how health affects large populations and work to reduce problems associated with public health crises.

### Public Health Educator

- Teach people how to live healthier lives and make better health decisions that lead to healthier communities.

### Biostatistician

- Apply statistics to public health concerns, create experiments and surveys to collect key data relevant to maintaining the public health.

### Health Policy Associate

- Perform analysis of health situation reports in different communities and assemble information to impact policy changes.

### Health Services Administrator

- Manage both the human and fiscal resources that are needed to deliver the most effective public health services.

### Environmental Health Scientist

- Identify problems in the environment and determine the best solutions to reduce any risks to the health of communities, such as water and air risks.

### Disaster & Emergency Specialist

- Assemble disaster response plans and train other professionals on the best ways to respond to emergencies and disasters.

### Clinical Research Coordinator

- Specialized research professional who works with a clinical principal investigator, usually an MD.

## Education Programs

A Bachelor's degree may be adequate for many public health careers. However, it is becoming increasingly common to obtain a graduate degree in the profession, typically lasting 2 academic years. There are several types of degree programs offered for public health, including:

- **Master's in Public Health (MPH)**
  - The most commonly awarded degree
- **Master's of Health Administration (MHA)**
  - For students focused on leadership/operations
- **Master of Science in Public Health (MSPH)**
  - More research-oriented master's degree type, common for career goals such as environmental health, biostatistics or epidemiology
- **PhD**
  - Available to students interested in college-level teaching and research

The Association for Schools and Programs of Public Health has a [Program Finder](#) to explore.

## Admission Requirements: Knowledge & Strategies

Many public health Master's programs have multiple deadline dates or operate on a rolling admissions process. Check individual programs for deadlines. Many programs do not have prerequisite expectations. However, some degree focuses, such as biostatistics, may require specific undergraduate coursework to be completed before you apply. Work with your faculty advisor to plan for prerequisite requirements. Start early and consult each institution's individual website for requirements. While some institutions will require specific coursework prior to matriculation, other programs will only require completion of a bachelor's degree.

## Prepare for and take the Graduate Record Exam (GRE)

- It is recommended to take the test at least one year before you want to go to public health graduate school. Most of those who take the GRE do so after their third year of college. [Learn more about the GRE](#) on ETS's website.
- Programs may set minimum scores and last acceptable test dates.
- Content tested:
  - Verbal Reasoning - ability to analyze and evaluate written material and synthesize information obtained from it
  - Quantitative Reasoning —basic concepts of arithmetic, algebra, geometry and data analysis
  - Analytical Writing — critical thinking and analytical writing skills

## Admissions is based on holistic review, involving factors beyond GRE scores and GPA such as:

- ▶ Exposure to public health initiatives
- ▶ Service to others
- ▶ Research experience
- ▶ Leadership and involvement

## Additional Tips

- Build relationships: create a strong network of pre-health advisors, faculty, peers and professionals. Remember, such connections can open up opportunities for you and letters of recommendation will be required to apply.
- Many public health programs have multiple deadline dates (preferred, priority, or early decision) or operate on a rolling admissions process. Consult individual program websites for deadlines.
- When you submit an application, remember you will typically do so through a centralized application form, called [SOPHAS](#).

## Want more information?

Schedule an appointment through [Handshake](#) to meet with a career coach, learn more and create plans to meet your goals!