

Public health consists of various specialty areas that address the physical, mental and environmental health concerns of communities and populations at risk for disease and injury. Its goal is to improve and enhance quality of life through the application of health promotion and disease prevention technologies and interventions. Public health is open to all undergraduate students in a variety of majors, from the biological sciences to social sciences.

Public Health Workers Have the Following Goals:

to assess and monitor the health of communities and populations at risk and to identify health problems and priorities;

- to collaborate with community and government leaders, to formulate public policy to solve local and national health problems and priorities;
- to assure that all populations have access to appropriate and cost-effective care, including health promotion and disease prevention services, and to evaluate the effectiveness of that care.

How is Public Health Different From the Other Health Professions?

Public health is comprised of many professional disciplines such as medicine, dentistry, nursing, optometry, nutrition, social work, environmental sciences, health education, health services administration, and the behavioral sciences, its activities focus on entire populations rather than on individual patients.

The Population-based Approach to Health:

- eradicates life threatening diseases (e.g. smallpox, polio).
- controls and prevents infectious diseases and outbreaks (e.g. measles, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and Ebola virus).
- reduces death and disability due to unintentional injuries through formulations of policies designed to protect the safety of the public (e.g. seat belt and worker safety laws).
- promotes healthy lifestyles to prevent chronic diseases (e.g. cancer, heart disease, obesity).
- educates populations at risk to reduce sexually transmitted diseases, teen pregnancy and infant mortality.
- facilitates community empowerment to improve mental health, reduce substance abuse, and social violence.
- assures access to cost-effective care.
- evaluates the effectiveness of clinical and community-based interventions.
- assures our drinking and recreational waters are safe.
- prevents pollution of our air and land through enforcement of regulatory control and management of hazardous wastes.
- formulates policies in order to increase the quality of health care at local or state level.

The Difference Between a School and a Program

Schools of public health and public health programs differ in size and the opportunities they provide. In a school of public health, there are different departments focusing on specific public health areas. This means that more concentration areas will be offered. A public health program is part of a medical school or graduate school department and usually has a single focus, such as health education. However, an MPH or related degree will have the same credibility, regardless of the institution.

Criteria and Requirements for Applying

GPA – some schools only look at the upper division coursework.

Standardized Test Score – The general GRE is required. Some schools also accept the MCAT, especially for applicants to joint degree programs.

Experience – volunteer work and internships are always helpful. Up to 2 years of paid work experience may be required, depending on the school.

Personal Statement

Letters of Recommendation – from both professors and work supervisors.

Interview – not done by all schools; phone or in-person format depends on school.

Areas of Concentration

Regardless of their specialties, all students take introductory courses in bio statistics and epidemiological sciences basic to public health. Most schools also require one or more courses in health administration, environmental health and behavioral sciences. These core areas are essential for an MPH and recommended for all degree candidates. Once an area of concentration has been chosen, a student can develop a course of study geared to his/her individual professional goals, and encompassing classroom activity, field experience, and a significant research or laboratory project. Many schools either require or strongly recommend some type of work experience before enrollment and most encourage their students to seek summer employment which will further develop and enrich their public health background.

- Public Health Practice & Program Management
- Health Services Administration
- Bio statistics
- Biomedical & Laboratory Practice
- Epidemiology
- Nutrition
- Behavioral Sciences/ Health Education
- Occupational Safety & Health
- International/Global Health
- Environmental Health Sciences
- Maternal and Child Health

Public Health in California

California State University, Fresno – Master of Public Health Program

California State University, Long Beach – Master of Public Health Program

California State University, Northridge – Master of Public Health Program

California State University, San Francisco – Master of Public Health Program

California State University, San Diego – Graduate School of Public Health

California State University, San Jose – Master of Public Health Program

Loma Linda University – School of Public Health

UC Berkeley – School of Public Health

UC Davis – Master of Public Health Program

UCLA – School of Public Health

University of Southern California – Master of Public Health Program