



PUBLIC HEALTH 101

1

What is Public Health?

The places where we learn, work, and play all have an impact on our health. Public health promotes and protects the health of people, their families, and their communities.

2

Public Health = Community Health

A doctor treats people who are sick. People who work in public health are community protectors. They work to keep people from getting sick in the first place. This is the root of public health: to keep communities safe through prevention and early treatment.

3

Public Health is... Holistic

Public health advocates focus on the health of Schools, Tribes, and Communities. We also promote wellness by encouraging healthy behaviors – like eating healthy foods, getting regular exercise, being spiritually grounded and having healthy relationships.





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4 Public Health is... Indigenous!

Tribes have been protecting the health of their land, water, air, and people since time immemorial. Using cultural teachings to hunt and prepare indigenous foods, using traditional plants as medicines, hosting talking circles to support mental health... protecting Mother Earth, one another, and ourselves are all CORE aspects of public health.

5 Public Health jobs are incredibly diverse – Anyone can work in public health:

- Social workers
- First responders and EMTs
- Health educators
- Scientists and researchers
- Nutritionists
- Community planners
- IT – mHealth Technologists
- Web and Graphic Designers
- Communications Specialists
- Social Marketing Specialists
- Epidemiologists
- Public health physicians
- Public health nurses
- Lawyers
- Policy analysts
- Biologists and Environmental Health



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Prevention = Works Upstream

A Public Health Story: Three sisters were walking along a river bank and saw children floating in the water, struggling for help. The first sister jumped into the water – rescuing kids one-by-one – but couldn’t pull them out fast enough.

The second sister went to the riverbank – and started to teach the children how to swim.

The third sister went up-river to fix the railing on the bridge – to stop the kids from falling through in the first place. This traditional story epitomizes public health.

Prevention is a CORE public health principle.

7

Health Equality vs Health Equity

“Equality means each individual or group of people is given the same resources or opportunities. Equity recognizes that each person has different circumstances and allocates the exact resources and opportunities needed to reach an equal outcome... Equity is a solution for addressing imbalanced social systems. Justice can take equity one step further by fixing the systems in a way that leads to long-term, sustainable, equitable access for generations to come.”

Source: <https://onlinepublichealth.gwu.edu/resources/equity-vs-equality>.



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8

Social Justice = Health and Wellness is a Right for ALL

Everyone deserves equal access to healthcare and the ability to make choices about their health. Racism and discrimination have a negative effect on community health; things like food insecurity, unstable housing, and unsafe places to work, walk, and play all contribute to poor health.

Public health practitioners are committed to social justice – so all communities have healthy homes, healthy schools, and healthy relationships free of discrimination.

9

Social Determinants of Health

Did you know... that 80% of what makes up someone's health is determined by things that happen outside the health clinic? These "Social Determinants of Health" include where we live, work, learn and play. A few examples include employment, food security, housing, early childhood education, discrimination, access to health care, and safe places to walk. As you think about these examples, you can see that not every person has the same conditions, and that these conditions explain (in part) why some Americans are healthier than others.



MENTORING PUBLIC HEALTH INTERNS



Ideas for Hosting High School Students

1

Invite students to create a social media post or TikTok video that promotes a national health observance: <http://nphw.org>

2

Host a public health “career day” – invite a dietitian, an environmental health specialist (air, water, land preservation), or someone from your tribal health department to talk about their job.

3

Check out these Public Health lesson plans and worksheets from Lesson Planet: <https://www.lessonplanet.com/lesson-plans/public-health/all>

4

Have students read and discuss the articles on We R Native, that focus on health and wellness: <https://www.wernative.org/my-culture/identity-native-pride/wellness-healing>

Host a Public Health Intern

The Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board and We Are Healers are committed to supporting American Indian & Alaska Native youth interested in pursuing Public Health professions. Please consider hosting, mentoring, or supervising a student intern. Selected sites will receive \$2,500 to cover student stipends, the time/effort of mentors, and any other expenses associated with the internship.

Learn more and apply online: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/PublicHealthInternships>