



Public Health Industry Resource Guide

Background: The world faces both old and new public health challenges--the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the threat of bioterrorism, epidemics ranging from heart disease to cancer, the health of our increasingly elderly populations, the safety of our water and our food, and high-risk lifestyles, like smoking and substance abuse, which endanger our health (Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health). Infectious diseases, such as HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis, have the ability to destroy lives, strain community resources, and even threaten nations. In today's global environment, new diseases have the potential to spread across the world in a matter of days, or even hours, making early detection and action more important than ever (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention).

All of these issues make careers in public health inherently multi-disciplinary and demand that professional work extends across the biological, quantitative, and social sciences. Public health professionals confront the most pressing diseases of our time by adding to the knowledge of their underlying structure and function. Since preventing disease is at the heart of public health, one must look towards the social sciences to better understand health-related behaviors and their societal influences--critical elements in educating and empowering people to make healthier lifestyle choices (<http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/about.html>).

Career Pathways and Lifestyle: With the broad nature of a field like this, the career paths are greatly varied. Food security specialists, health educators, and program managers are a sample of the professions associated with the field. Many of these career paths will lead to jobs around the world with varied needs and demands. Organizations like Family Health International, Save the Children, and the World Health Organization all have many programs throughout the world to implement basic necessities in countries where resources are scarce. Most individuals seeking to make a career in public health will complete graduate degrees (masters, doctoral, etc.) which are typically required to advance.

Public health professionals work to serve local, national, or international populations, but they do this through work in both the public and the private sectors. "Many public health graduates will find work in the public sector in local, state, or federal health departments. The jobs available at health departments range from Food Safety Inspectors to Health Educators, from Policy Analysts to Epidemiologists. Other public health professionals will find work in university systems as researchers. Those interested in working for a non-profit organization can find jobs in health advocacy, policy, or research for organizations such as the American Cancer Society, the Red Cross, or a local non-profit that focuses on specific health issues. Still other health professionals will find work in the private sector- working in randomized control trials for pharmaceutical companies or for health insurance companies.

Points of Entry Into Public Health: It is difficult to obtain ideal jobs in high-impact areas without some experience (internships, volunteer work, etc.). There are many internship and volunteer opportunities with local health systems, research organizations, non-profits, health insurers, and community/government entities. When going international, it is best and usually required to have a working knowledge and experience outside of the field. Previous experience abroad (whether a semester of study or personal travel) is also seen as an asset.

Relevant Sample Areas of Specialization within Public Health

- Community & Family Health
- Environmental and Occupational Health
- Global/International Health
- Health Policy & Government
- Epidemiology & Biostatistics
- Behavioral Health
- Health Services Admin.
- Maternal and Child Health
- Nutrition
- Public Health Lab Practice
- Infectious Diseases
- Health Education

What Employers Want: Public health careers require a variety of different skills depending on the area of specialization—there is something for everyone. For example, epidemiology and biostatistics involve mathematics and modeling, environmental health includes a wide range of science skills, health administration and community health sciences are people oriented careers, while health education requires teaching abilities and health policy requires political knowledge.

Employers tend to look for undergraduates with a background in biology, engineering, chemistry, nursing, medicine, or the social sciences. For epidemiology or biostatistics coursework in biology and mathematics is a plus. For behavioral sciences, Health Education or Global Health, courses in sociology, psychology, education or anthropology are beneficial. Health Services Administration professionals find a business background helpful, while Environmental Health professionals look for a background in biology or chemistry. Competence in written and verbal communication skills is a must for all professionals.

Considering Public Health? If you're interested in a career that has broad impact on health and well-being, Public Health is an excellent choice. With options to work on projects both domestically and internationally, the field is filled with opportunities. To learn more, consider attending events sponsored by the Career Center, conducting an informational interview with a JHU alumnus working in the field, or viewing information from one of the professional associations below.

Leading Firms

American Red Cross
www.redcross.org

CARE
www.care.org

Child Health Foundation
www.childhealthfoundation.org

CONCERN Worldwide
www.concernusa.org

Doctors without Borders
www.doctorswithoutborders.com

Global Health Council
www.globalhealth.org

Hunger Project
www.thp.org

Save the Children
www.savethechildren.org

Bread for the World
www.bread.org

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
www.cdc.gov

Christian Children's Fund
www.christianchildrensfund.org

Doctors of the World
www.doctorsoftheworld.org

The Gates Foundation
www.gatesfoundation.org

Helen Keller International
www.hki.org

International Women's Health Coalition
www.iwhc.org

World Health Organization
www.who.int/en

Professional Associations: Each industry field has at least one (but many times several) professional associations that serve professionals (including students) in that field. Many provide research on trends, access to job boards, and options to learn new skills through webinars, annual conferences, and industry publications (journals, newsletters, etc.).

A Sampling of Professional Associations in the Public Health Industry:

American Public Health
Association Foreign Policy
Association
The United Nations Foundation

The American Society for Nutrition
International Nutrition Foundation
The World Bank Group Food
Programs