Master of Public Health in Public Health Practice

Public health embraces an ecological approach that recognizes the interactions and relationships among multiple determinants of health. Public health professionals typically take a community or population focus. Our graduate program prepares public health practitioners who identify and assess needs of populations; plan, implement and evaluate programs to address those needs; and otherwise assure conditions that protect and promote the health of populations. The Master of Public Health (MPH) in Public Health Practice is an interdisciplinary degree designed to provide a broad background to meet the challenges of the diverse and complex field of public health, with a particular focus on the needs of Alaska and the circumpolar north. Students with backgrounds in the natural sciences, social sciences, health professions, human services, business, education and law have successfully entered the field of public health at the graduate level.

Both mid-career students and recent graduates may pursue their careers with minimal disruption while working on the MPH because all required courses are offered via distance format. Students are required to attend one mandatory meeting in Anchorage each year, typically in conjunction with the Alaska Public Health Summit, and are expected to communicate frequently with their MPH academic advisor. In-person oral defense of capstone thesis in Anchorage is also expected of the student at the end of the MPH program.

This degree requires core courses in health education and behavioral sciences, environmental and occupational health, health management and policy, biostatistics, and epidemiology. It also includes coursework in research methods, program evaluation, circumpolar health issues, and management of public health emergencies and disasters, as well as the opportunity to create an individualized emphasis as the foundation for the required capstone project.

MPH Mission Statement

The MPH in Public Health Practice program at the University of Alaska Anchorage enhances health in diverse communities across Alaska, the circumpolar north, the nation and the world. This is accomplished through excellence in the education of public health practice leaders, scientific investigation of public health issues and engaging communities in an organized effort to identify, assess, prevent and mitigate community health challenges.

Admission Requirements

Satisfy the Admission Requirements for Graduate Degrees (http://catalog.uaa.alaska.edu/academicpoliciesprocesses/admissions/graduate). In addition, students should also meet the following criteria when applying for admission to the MPH program:

1. Submit documentation indicating a grade of 2.00 (C or higher) in an introductory statistics course which covers descriptive and inferential statistics.
2. Provide a copy of one professional or technical writing sample of which the student is the primary author.
3. Provide a current resume or curriculum vitae (CV).
4. Submit an essay explaining how and why obtaining the MPH degree would contribute to the student’s career goals.
5. Completed applications are reviewed twice each year. The Department of Health Sciences deadlines are March 1 for fall admission and October 1 for spring admission. UAA admission must be successfully processed before the Department of Health Sciences will consider an application complete. The UAA process may take as long as four months, so applicants are encouraged to apply to the university first and early.

Note also that:

1. To the extent that there are limited positions available in the program, preference may be given to residents of the state of Alaska as defined by the university’s policy on residency for tuition purposes. To help diversify our public health workforce and better reflect the demographics of our state, we also actively encourage applications from those who may be from underrepresented populations, such as minorities, rural/frontier communities, and/or those who are the first in their family to go to college.
2. Preference may also be given to applicants with two or more years work experience in the field of public health. Such applicants must submit documentation of their public health-related work experience, and a request for special consideration to the admissions committee.
3. Decisions by the Admissions Committee are considered final. Those who are not admitted in the program are encouraged to strengthen their application before re-application.

Professional Program Fee

A professional program fee is required of all students in the MPH program in addition to course tuition fees, lab fees, course material fees, and student activity fees. The professional program fee is a sum equal to 50 percent of resident tuition, and is charged upon enrollment in MPH courses. The fee contributes directly to program support.

Academic Requirements

A student in the MPH program is expected to complete a minimum of 6 semester credits each academic year, beginning with the first semester of enrollment. The 6 semester credits may consist of prerequisite courses or program courses. Failure to comply with the 6 credit minimum each academic year may result in the removal from the program. See also General University Requirements for Graduate Degrees (http://catalog.uaa.alaska.edu/graduateprograms/degreerequirements) for additional requirements to remain in good standing and to meet academic expectations toward the degree.

Candidacy Requirements

See the section Advancement to Candidacy (http://catalog.uaa.alaska.edu/graduateprograms/degreerequirements).
Graduation Requirements

- Satisfy the General University Requirements for Graduate Degrees (http://catalog.uaa.alaska.edu/graduateprograms/degereerequirements).
- Complete the program requirements below.

Program Requirements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Credits</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Core Courses</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS A605</td>
<td>Public Health and Society</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS A610</td>
<td>Environmental and Occupational Health</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS A615</td>
<td>Health Services Administration</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS A624</td>
<td>Circumpolar Health Issues</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS A625</td>
<td>Biostatistics for Health Professionals</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS A626</td>
<td>Principles of Epidemiology</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS/SWK A628</td>
<td>Program Evaluation</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS A629</td>
<td>Public Health Research Tools and Methods</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS A630</td>
<td>Public Health Emergencies and Disasters</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete three focused public health-related emphasis courses at the 600-level with advisor approval</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>HS A698</td>
<td>MPH Practicum-Project</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>or HS A699</td>
<td>MPH Practicum-Thesis</td>
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Total Credits 42

A total of 42 credits is required for the degree.

MPH Program Goals and Program-Level Objectives

Based on national accreditation criteria (Council on Education for Public Health, www.ceph.org) and quality standards, the overall MPH Program student goal is to prepare public health professionals who can demonstrate attainment of the following 12 foundational public health knowledge learning objectives, 22 MPH program core competencies, and 7 public health practice generalist track specific competencies.

MPH Program Foundational Knowledge Learning Objectives

Profession and Science of Public Health

1. Explain public health history, philosophy, and values.
2. Identify the core functions of public health and the 10 Essential Services of Public Health.
3. Explain the role of quantitative and qualitative methods and sciences in describing and assessing a population’s health.
4. List major causes and trends of morbidity and mortality in the U.S. or other community relevant to the program.
5. Discuss the science of primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention in population health, including health promotion and screening.
6. Explain the critical importance of evidence in advancing public health knowledge.

Factors Related to Human Health

7. Explain effects of environmental factors on a population’s health.
8. Explain biological and genetic factors that affect a population’s health.
9. Explain behavioral and psychological factors that affect a population’s health.
10. Explain the social, political, and economic determinants of health and how they contribute to population health and health inequities.
11. Explain how globalization affects global burdens of disease.
12. Explain an ecological perspective on the connections among human health, animal health and ecosystem health (e.g., One Health).

MPH Program Competencies

Evidence-based Approaches to Public Health

1. Apply epidemiological methods to the breadth of settings and situations in public health practice.
2. Select quantitative and qualitative data collection methods appropriate for a given public health context.
3. Analyze quantitative and qualitative data using biostatistics, informatics, computer-based programming and software, as appropriate.
4. Interpret results of data analysis for public health research, policy or practice.

Public Health & Health Care Systems

5. Compare the organization, structure and function of health care, public health and regulatory systems across national and international settings.
6. Discuss the means by which structural bias, social inequities and racism undermine health and create challenges to achieving health equity at organizational, community and societal levels.

Planning & Management to Promote Health

7. Assess population needs, assets and capacities that affect communities’ health.
8. Apply awareness of cultural values and practices to the design or implementation of public health policies or programs.
9. Design a population-based policy, program, project or intervention.

10. Explain basic principles and tools of budget and resource management.

11. Select methods to evaluate public health programs.

**Policy in Public Health**

12. Discuss multiple dimensions of the policy-making process, including the roles of ethics and evidence.

13. Propose strategies to identify stakeholders and build coalitions and partnerships for influencing public health outcomes.

14. Advocate for political, social or economic policies and programs that will improve health in diverse populations.

15. Evaluate policies for their impact on public health and health equity.

**Leadership**

16. Apply principles of leadership, governance and management, which include creating a vision, empowering others, fostering collaboration and guiding decision making.

17. Apply negotiation and mediation skills to address organizational or community challenges.

**Communication**

18. Select communication strategies for different audiences and sectors.

19. Communicate audience-appropriate public health content, both in writing and through oral presentation.

20. Describe the importance of cultural competence in communicating public health content.

**Interprofessional Practice**

21. Perform effectively on interprofessional teams.

**Systems Thinking**

22. Apply systems thinking tools to a public health issue.

**MPH in Public Health Practice Generalist Track Specific Competencies**

**Applied Research and Evaluation**

1. Apply core public health research and evaluation skills in real world situations where the practitioner may have little control.

**Circumpolar Health**

2. Identify and analyze current circumpolar health issues and recognize unique social, cultural, and environmental conditions that affect population health in the arctic.

**Community Needs Assessment**

3. Diagnose public health problems in the communities and gather information needed to determine when and where to involve public health specialists and other experts.

**Diversity and Cultural Humility**

4. Engage sensitively, professionally, and respectfully with individuals and communities with diverse characteristics.

**Information, Education, and Communication**

5. Promote and improve health through population-specific and culturally-appropriate materials, resources, and outreach.

**Professionalism and Ethics**

6. Demonstrate ethical and informed decision-making, accountability, and reflective professional practices implicit in public health action and research.

**Public Health Response**

7. Respond quickly and effectively to emerging public health concerns, coordinating the response and enlisting the help of specialist as appropriate.