What is Public Health?

Public health promotes and protects the health of people and the communities where they live, learn, work and play. Public health saves money, improves our quality of life, helps children thrive and reduces human suffering.

While a doctor treats people who are sick, those of us working in public health try to prevent people from getting sick or injured in the first place. We also promote wellness by encouraging healthy behaviors.

From conducting scientific research to educating about health, people in the field of public health work to assure the conditions in which people can be healthy. That can mean vaccinating children and adults to prevent the spread of disease. Or educating people about the risks of alcohol and tobacco. Public health sets safety standards to protect workers and develops school nutrition programs to ensure kids have access to healthy food.

Public health works to track disease outbreaks, prevent injuries and shed light on why some of us are more likely to suffer from poor health than others. The many facets of public health include speaking out for laws that promote smoke-free indoor air and seatbelts, spreading the word about ways to stay healthy and giving science-based solutions to problems.

In the medical field, clinicians treat diseases and injuries one patient at a time. But in public health, we prevent disease and injury. Public health researchers, practitioners, and educators work with communities and populations. We identify the causes of disease and disability, and we implement largescale solutions.

For example, instead of treating a gunshot wound, we work to identify the causes of gun violence and develop interventions. Instead of treating premature or low birth-weight babies, we investigate the factors at work and we develop programs to keep babies healthy. And instead of prescribing medication for high blood pressure, we examine the links among obesity, diabetes and heart disease—and we use our data to influence policy aimed at reducing all three conditions.

Today, public health encompasses areas as wide-ranging as chronic disease, the science of aging, mental health, disaster response, refugee health, injury prevention, policy development, and tobacco control.

Here are some real-life public health work examples:

- Identifying ways to curb bullying in schools
- Delivering vitamin A to newborns in developing nations
- Uncovering correlations between kidney function and heart disease
- Examining secondhand tobacco smoke levels and exposure
- Exploring environmental and genetic factors in autism
- Investigating the consequences of antibiotic use in industrial agriculture
- Developing emergency preparedness plans
• Improving technologies that make clean and safe drinking water
• Promoting policies that protect the global environment and sustainable practices
• Using evidence to strengthen family planning, and reproductive health programs and policies
• Quantifying the links between human rights abrogation and poor health

What is the history of the SIUC MPH degree?

The Master’s of Public Health (MPH) is a well-respected degree that has been available for decades. Traditionally, MPH degrees were offered at Schools of Public Health.

In the early 1970s, a number of universities without a School of Public Health decided to offer MPH degrees – they were referred to as programs/degrees outside Schools of Public Health. Historically, the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH) would only accredit those programs with a major/concentration in Community Health Education or Preventive Medicine/Community Health.

In spring of 2002, the faculty in the health education program at Southern Illinois University Carbondale decided to forward a proposal to offer an MPH in Community Health Education. Upon approval in the summer of 2004, this new degree replaced the extremely successful MS in Community Health Education and the first cohort matriculated the following fall.

The major or concentration is Community Health Education. The SIUC MPH matches the CEPH requirements expected of all MPH program (within or outside Schools of Public Health). By selecting this degree, you are becoming a public health education professional. Although you will have taken several core courses, you will not be trained as a public health epidemiologist, a public health administrator, a public health biostatistician, or a public health environmentalist. Your expertise will be in community health education.

CEPH Accreditation

The Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH) is the nationally recognized accrediting body for both schools of public health and public health programs. The Southern Illinois University MPH program accredited by the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH) through 2025.
MPH Practicum Overview
The MPH practicum is an opportunity for graduate-level public health students at Southern Illinois University Carbondale (SIUC) to apply public health competencies in a real-world setting. The practicum consists of three components:

1) The first element is the **Applied Practice Experience (APE)**, which aims for a student to develop skills/competencies and demonstrate the application of these through a practice experience relevant to the student’s areas of interest. It includes a **240-hour practice experience** at a community agency with a strong public health focus as well as the production of **two tangible deliverables** based on CEPH competencies.

2) The second element is the **Integrated Learning Experience (ILE)**. The ILE is a quality **written product** that demonstrates the synthesis of foundational competencies. Students are expected to produce a report that could be a program evaluation, research paper (quantitative/qualitative/mixed methods), or policy analysis/evaluation. It is submitted to faculty for evaluation and remediation as needed in the student’s final semester.

3) The final element is to create and deliver a quality **oral presentation** and professional handout. Students will present to faculty, classmates, local preceptors, and others during finals week of the respective semester (via electronic media for those who are at a remote location with prior approval).

A practicum is coordinated between a preceptor (a public health professional working at a public health organization in the field), SIUC, and a student. The practicum meets the needs of the participating organization or agency, while the student learns to apply public health skills and competencies. It must have realistic expectations and objectives that can be delivered within a specific amount of time (typically on a part-time basis), and must focus on at least five public health competencies. Learning objectives for the practicum must be competency-based. Practicum projects can be completed by one student or a group of students as warranted.

Applied Practice Experience (APE) Overview
The Applied Practice Experience (APE) is a required component of the Master of Public Health (MPH) degree program. The Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH) requires that “all graduate professional public health degree students develop skills in basic public health concepts and demonstrate the application of these concepts through a practice experience that is relevant to student’s areas of specialization.” As such, the APE is an opportunity for students to:

1. Integrate and apply knowledge and skills from coursework to a practical setting to strengthen public health competencies.
2. Work with experienced public health practitioners to create two tangible deliverables to add to your portfolio.
Students must complete an APE at a community-based practice site under the supervision of a preceptor with advanced knowledge and experience in the field of public health. The experience should address at least five (5) of the MPH competencies (at least three (3) of which must be foundational), and lead to the creation of at least two high quality, tangible products that are useful to the host organization.

**Practicum Coordinator**
The practicum coordinator can be reached at Kristen.brewer@siu.edu.

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**Preceptors**

**Introduction**

Thank you for your interest in hosting a MPH student practicum!

You and your site were pursued and selected because you can offer SIU MPH students excellent opportunities, activities, and expertise necessary for an effective “reality-based” learning experience. This information packet provides guidance regarding the practicum process, including application procedure and the roles and responsibilities of the preceptor.

Please feel free to contact us at any point with any questions or concerns.

**Note:** The following materials are specific to the MPH practicum requirement. All professional degree students need to complete a practicum to comply with the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH) program of public health accreditation requirements.

**Preceptor & Host Site Benefits**

Hosting an MPH student provides benefits to the organization, too!

- Students complete or conduct projects the organization may not have the capacity to do.
- Students may provide creative ideas and solutions.
- Students build professional capacity and may be recruited for a permanent position.
- Organizations and preceptors influence the quality of public health professionals.

**Overarching Goal**

The goal of this experience is to demonstrate the application of public health concepts learned throughout the MPH program and to enhance skills such as leadership, communication, and collaboration. The culmination of the MPH program is vital and provides
students the opportunity to apply the knowledge and skills learned during their courses to real public health problems and situations. These experiences provide insight to the public health field.

1. Allow the student to apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills learned in the public health program in an agency setting under the supervision and guidance of a mentor-preceptor who has significant public health training and/or experience.
2. Provide students with the opportunity to:
   - Observe and interact with a variety of public health professionals and observe their management style and leadership skills.
   - Gain practical experience in applying public health and health education concepts and aid in the understanding of public health practice.
   - Establish professional contacts in the public health field.
   - Discover professional strengths and weaknesses, learn practical skills, and professional approaches to job duties.
3. Provide the university with a work setting for training and evaluating student performance and professional preparedness.
4. Provide the public health practitioner with an opportunity to contribute to the education of new professionals, and to evaluate students for potential professional positions.

Practicum Requirements

The following criteria reflect the minimum practicum requirements:

A practicum experience...

1. Applies public health skills and competencies relevant to the student’s area of interest.
2. Is framed and carried out within a public health practice context (includes population level activities at an established organization or agency).
3. Is supervised by a qualified preceptor who has experience and knowledge in the subject matter.
4. Is a significant experience (minimum 240-hours).
5. Is an evaluated experience: preceptors evaluate students based on achievement of defined learning objectives and deliverables; students reflect on and evaluate their overall practicum experiences.

Qualifications of SIUC MPH Students

Southern Illinois University Carbondale Master of Public Health (MPH) students come with a variety of skills and experiences. Each student admitted to the SIUC MPH program must have a baccalaureate degree. As work experience is not an admission requirement, students may have varying levels of professional knowledge.
Organizations and Preceptors Qualified to Host a Student

Practicum placements can be in a variety of organizations, including local and state public health agencies, community-based organizations, private corporations, as well as international non-governmental agencies and organizations. Host sites must be an established organization with at least one full-time staff member and a physical, public office location. A qualified preceptor must commit time to supervising a student throughout the experience and providing feedback on the student’s work. The preceptor should have knowledge of the project area and work with the student to develop the practicum project in order to guide the student throughout the process.

As part of the Council on Education for Public Health accreditation requirements, SIUC is required to assess preceptor qualifications. All preceptors must submit a resume or CV to the SIUC MPH program along with their practicum project submission. These materials can be emailed to kristen.brewer@siu.edu.

The preceptor should have:

1) An MPH or higher (degrees similar to an MPH may be considered)
2) A bachelor’s degree with 5+ years of public health experience
3) Experience with the organization
4) An interest in and commitment to helping a student

Preceptor Roles and Responsibilities

The site preceptor will supervise the student, along with general oversight from the SIUC MPH team. The preceptor will develop the practicum activities, learning objectives, and deliverables. As such, the preceptor will be familiar with the student’s projects.

Preceptor Responsibilities:

1) Develop and agree to facilitate the practicum experience.
2) Work with the student to identify relevant, realistic, and meaningful projects to be completed, including opportunities to practice the five chosen competencies and a final written work product.
3) Inform your organization’s leadership about the practicum, and identify an alternate preceptor.
4) If looking to identify a student, submit a practicum project by email to kristen.brewer@siu.edu (include submission of CV or resume)
5) From interested candidates, select a student to complete the project.
6) Assist the student with their Practicum Learning Plan, which outlines the roles and responsibilities of the student, preceptor, and SIUC, as well as the practicum project description, specific goals and objectives, and proposed timeline.
7) Provide adequate working space and resources for the student as needed (e.g. computer, Internet, desk).
8) Review the organization’s mission, policies, rules, etc. with the student.
9) Provide the student with any necessary background information and materials as warranted.
10) Meet with the student regularly to provide necessary guidance and supervision, as well as establish and maintain project goals, objectives, and timeline.
11) Identify professional development experiences outside of the practicum that will expose the student to the culture of working at the practicum site (e.g. staff meetings, conference calls, etc.) if available.

12) Sign the time sheet for applicable time spent with the site.

13) Complete evaluations of the student.
   1. Progress Report (at the mid-point of experience)
      i. Preceptor
      ii. Student
   2. Evaluation of student (at the end of experience)
      i. Preceptor
      ii. Student

14) Communicate with the MPH coordinator in regards to any issues or concerns throughout the practical experience.

Be clear about the expectations for dress, attendance, absences, and communication: treat the student like an employee where feasible.

**Financial Compensation**

The practicum is NOT required to be a paid experience, but it is allowed. If payment is involved, the preceptor and student must negotiate the terms on their own. SIUC will not be involved in arranging or dispersing any form of payment.

**Hour & Deliverable Requirements**

There is a 240-hour minimum requirement, and the student must create at least two (2) tangible products that are useful to the host organizations. These products are predetermined before the hours begin.

**Place of Employment as a Host Site**

In very rare and exceptional situations, a student may complete the practicum experience at their place of employment if:

1) The project is different from regular work.
2) Work hours are not counted towards the required 240-hour minimum.
3) The project is in a different department and/or under a different supervisor.

*Such a request is reviewed on a case-by-case basis and is carefully scrutinized due to the risk regarding conflict of interest (confusion on what the individual [as an employee] is being paid to do and what he/she [as a student] is required to do to complete the course/degree requirements).*

Just like any course, enrollment necessitates registration and completion of course requirements; therefore, a student should plan to take time off work if needed.

**Host Site Regulation Compliance**

The student must comply with all regulations established by the host site, including any immunization requirements.
Preceptor Practicum Planning Steps

Step 1: Develop a Practicum Opportunity
Once you have decided that you are willing to serve as a preceptor and that your organization is able to offer a student practicum project, the next step is to develop a practicum opportunity.

Consider the needs of your organization and how a project could fulfill that need. The best projects are those that are well-defined, specific, and can be completed in a specified time period. A practicum must have realistic expectations and objectives and must be competency-based (see the list of public health competencies that students will select from to focus on during their practicum).

Example practicum projects are available upon request. If you would like assistance developing your practicum project, please contact the SIUC MPH practicum coordinator.

Please complete the MPH Practice Experience Opportunity form and email a completed form to the practicum coordinator at kristen.brewer@siu.edu.

Step 2: Submit a Practicum Opportunity
After you submit a completed MPH Practical Experience Opportunity, the MPH team will review the opportunity to determine if it meets the practicum criteria. If it meets the criteria, it will be shared with potential student applicants.

If the proposed project does not meet the practicum criteria, the MPH coordinator will contact you with feedback about how to revise the project to meet the MPH practicum requirements. After making changes, you can resubmit the opportunity.

Step 3: Conduct Student Interview/Select a Student
You determine the application procedure as well as the number of students you choose to interview. To have a better chance of finding the right student, it is suggested to interview several students. In-person interviews are encouraged to better assess each applicant, as well as for student to experience the travel from their location to your organization’s office. However, if necessary, phone or videoconference interviews are acceptable. After you select a student, please inform the MPH coordinator that the position is filled.
MPH Student

Suggested Planning Steps

Step 1: Find a Site

During PH 599A: MPH Applied Practical Experience (APE) Seminar (roughly six months before the practical experience begins), students will reach out to potential public health sites and start applying. An updated resume and cover letter describing their interests, skill sets, a brief description of the requirements (final products, a defined preceptor, etc.), and the types of opportunities desired (unpaid, evening hours, etc.) should be created.

Tips for Applying:

➢ Have a mentor or career service professional review your resume and cover letter.
➢ Local job postings are a good resource to identify potential sites. Although students may not be looking for a full-time job, job postings can help identify public health organizations in your area.
➢ Many agencies post internship/volunteer opportunities on their websites.
➢ Although e-mail is a good way to make an initial inquiry/contact, seek out opportunities to meet potential preceptors in person (e.g. requesting informational interviews, attending and volunteering at outreach events/seminars).
➢ Create and use a spreadsheet to keep track of organizations you have contacted.
➢ When meeting with potential preceptors, discuss interests and career goals while being open and flexible to learn more about the organization and available projects.
➢ Always be courteous and professional.

*Additional tips for finding a site can be found on page 17 of this handbook

Step 2: Identify a Project

Before completing the required courses, you should start thinking about the applied practical experience you want to complete.

Keep in mind that the APE should be a meaningful experience with authentic student participation within a team of public health professionals.

It is also an opportunity for you to explore potential employment agencies upon graduation. You may work in a variety of public health agencies that fit your skill sets and career goals. Potential sites include community-based organizations or clinics, local and state health departments, or schools. Hospitals can serve as APE sites if the project will involve healthcare management, emergency preparedness, or quality improvement. Universities and research centers may only be approved if they are based in the community and the project does not involve clinical work such as direct patient care.
In general, a practical experience entails one or more of the following roles:

➢ Assessing, monitoring, or analyzing data to ensure equity and quality of public health services.
➢ Planning, designing, implementing, and evaluating public health interventions.
➢ Developing disease prevention and health promotion, media advocacy, or risk communication materials.
➢ Developing, implementing, and evaluating public health laws, regulations, and policies.
➢ Participating in administrative or management activities, which could include quality improvement, organizational analysis, or strategic planning.
➢ Supporting the development and goals of public health coalitions through community organizing and advocacy efforts, needs assessments, strategic and participatory community planning.
➢ Participating in the development and/or execution of applied public health research, including translational, evaluation, and epidemiological research efforts that contribute to the evidence-base and efficacy of public health practice.

The following questions may be helpful in identifying a project:

➢ What skills would I like to develop/enhance? (e.g. quantitative skills, communication and facilitation skills)
➢ What strengths and expertise would I bring to the organization?
➢ Which type of setting would I like to explore? (e.g., a state health department or a small community-based organization, working domestically or abroad).
➢ How much flexibility would I need to complete a project? (i.e. consider whether your schedule and availability would be compatible with those of the organization)

Remember, you must have 2 tangible products at the end of your APE so ensure you will be able to achieve those.

Step 3: Complete Paperwork

Once you have selected a site, you will need to follow these steps in order to ensure proper paperwork is completed and filed.

1. Check to see if your selected site has an affiliation agreement on file with SIU. There is an updated spreadsheet located here:
   https://extendedcampus.siu.edu/compliance/Internship%20Sites.php
   Or you can check with the MPH Coordinator.
   a. If affiliation agreement exists (and is not expired) but does not cover the public health program, the student must complete the MOU amendment and then go to Step 3.
b. If no affiliation agreement exists with site, proceed to Step 2.

2. Fill out the Education Affiliation Agreement document. (also referred to as MOU in some instances). This must be filled out and signed by site coordinator. Once it is completed, the student will submit to MPH coordinator.

3. Once the affiliation agreement or amendment are filed, you can begin working on your Applied practice learning plan (APLP) and the Applied practice learning plan grid. The grid is a sort of “snapshot” of the APLP. These you will fill out with your preceptor and will be reviewed during 599B: MPH Applied Practice Experience.

These steps are crucial to ensuring your success during the APE. Failure to complete the necessary paperwork may result in not being able to enroll in Ph 599B: MPH Applied Practice Experience and PH 599C: MPH Integrative Learning Experience.

**Step 4: Register for PH 599B: MPH Applied Practice Experience (APE)**

During this course, students will be gaining experience at their practicum site. 240 hours will be completed by the end of the term. Hours may start before the start of 599B, if approved by preceptor and MPH Coordinator. In order to stay on track the following will need to be completed during PH 599B:

- Weekly time logs
- Mid-term and final student self-evaluations
- Updated/review of Applied practice learning plan and grid
- Review and Reflection of competencies

**Step 5: Register for PH 599C: MPH Integrative Learning Experience (ILE)**

This course is designed to guide the student through the ILE paper and presentation to demonstrate synthesis of foundation and program competencies.

- Written product: This should be a HIGH-QUALITY product (e.g., mentored research report, journal article, grant application, policy development, project plan, evaluation or technical report, etc.). Whatever type you choose, it MUST contain:
  - Clearly defined overview, background and significance, or statement of the problem
  - Thorough literature review
  - Discussion or critical analysis
  - Recommendations, public health implications, or conclusions

- Presentation: Students should develop a presentation as an overview of the above written assignment. This is detailed in Step 6 below.
Step 6: Presentation

Students will present an overview of their written assignment to instructor and MPH faculty. Presentations will be professional and provide evidence of the student’s ability to apply knowledge and skills learned from the program and experience to the product. Students will be evaluated using a rubric.

In the event that you complete your practicum off the traditional MPH cycle, (i.e. during summer, etc.) you will be required to submit your Capstone PowerPoint Presentation with an audio voice over. These guides will instruct how to complete this task.

How to add a voice over:

Recording Voice-over Narration in PowerPoint:
http://webcampus.drexelmed.edu/time/recordingpowerpointvoice-overnarration.pdf

How to Add Voice Over to PowerPoint 2010 Slides:
http://www.emergingedtech.com/2014/05/how-to-add-voice-over-to-powerpoint-2010-slides/

How to Add Voice Over to PowerPoint 2007 Presentations in 5 Easy Steps:
http://www.emergingedtech.com/2012/12/add-voice-over-to-powerpoint-presentations-in-5-easy-steps/

Step 7: Course Evaluation & Exit Interview

Upon completion of the course, students will receive an evaluation from the instructor and will participate in an exit interview where they will receive and give feedback around the program and future plans.

Tips for filling out the Applied Practice Experience Learning Contract:

➢ The deliverables/products are the items that the student will create for the site by the end of the practice experience.
➢ There is a minimum of two products.
➢ The tasks are the specific activities that will lead to the creation of the final products.
➢ The competencies demonstrated are the public health skills that will be acquired by completing the identified tasks and creating the final products.
➢ The competencies are listed in the Applied Practice Learning Plan (APLP) – a minimum of five (5) is required for the entire experience (not five (5) competencies per product).
➢ An example of the completed table is page 14.
➢ This is not an exhaustive list, but some examples of acceptable final products for your APE include:
  o Surveys (quantitative or qualitative)
  o Datasets
  o GIS Maps
  o Program evaluation reports
  o Scientific posters
  o Policy evaluations
  o Grant proposals
  o Health promotion materials
  o Training course curriculum
  o Site-specific reports
  o Developing a toolbox on a specific health topic for a specific target audience – tools needed to conduct a program such as worksite wellness programs, incorporating gardens into the classroom, or providing healthier foods at convenience stores.
  o Collecting data on specific indicators and comparing the state data as the first step in developing a community health needs assessment.
  o Designing and implementing a survey to collect needs assessment information for a specific program.
  o Planning a community event focused on public health.
  o Developing a directory of community resources on a specific health topic.
  o Researching evidence-based practices and policies for addressing a specific health issue or social determinant of health.
  o Developing a communication plan for a public health program including press releases, social media postings, and handout materials.
  o Developing an evaluation plan and tools for a specific program.

Research

The SIUC Office of Sponsored Projects Administration:

Human Subjects
https://ospa.siu.edu/compliance/human-subjects/
https://ospa.siu.edu/compliance/

IRB
Students will not be allowed to start the applied practice

Ethics
Students will not be allowed to start the applied practice

Research Compliance
https://ospa.siu.edu/compliance/
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency</th>
<th>Tasks/Activities</th>
<th>Final Product(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 FC #3: Analyze quantitative and qualitative data using biostatistics, informatics, computer-based programming and software, as appropriate.</td>
<td>1. Export survey data from Survey Monkey to STATA for analysis. 2. Perform data analysis under supervision of preceptor. 3. Generate graphs and tables using Microsoft Excel.</td>
<td>Scientific Poster to be presented at the APHA 2020 conference.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 FC #4: Interpret results of data analysis for public health research, policy or practice.</td>
<td>1. Write a summary report of the analyses conducted. 2. Use the information from the report to create a high quality poster.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 FC #11: Select methods to evaluate public health programs.</td>
<td>1. Utilize the PRECEDE-PROCEDE model to evaluate the success of the 'It's Your Game' program. 2. Complete each step of the PRECEDE-PROCEDE model.</td>
<td>Evaluation report for the It's Your Game program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 PC #2: identify challenges and evaluate community-based partnerships as applied to rural and/or underserved populations</td>
<td>1. Identify peer-reviewed resources and generate a report on appropriate methods for evaluating health promotion programs. 2. Evaluate how the program utilized the funding received in 2019/2020 FY.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 PC #5: Identify and make accessible community resources related to a specific health issue or a specific target audience.</td>
<td>1. Develop information pieces for schools to use as recruiting tools for new students to participate</td>
<td>Information packets and sheets for It's Your Game</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Example of Aligned Competencies, Tasks, and Final Products**

*FC = Foundational Competency  
PC = Program Competency*
Frequently Asked Questions

Will the program provide sites for completion of the APE?

Due to the fact that we have students all over the US and in other countries, the program cannot provide sites where you can complete an APE. There is a list of sites where students have completed practice experiences in the past that can serve as a guide for your search, and your practicum coordinator or academic advisor can provide additional guidance on how to begin your search.

When will I work on my capstone paper?

According to the 2016 CEPH guidelines, what is currently known as the capstone paper will be referred to as the integrative learning experience (ILE). The ILE (PH 599C) will be taken as a standalone 1 credit hour course at the end of your MPH program.

Why do you need to find your own practicum site?

We get a lot of questions from students about why the program does not find practicum sites for students. First of all, we have students all over the US and abroad, therefore it is logistically not possible for us to establish academic-practice partnerships with organizations in every city in the U.S. as is the case with some schools. And then, of course, the choice of a practicum site should be driven by the student’s career goals and interests.

The Graduate Programs in Public Health supports our students with the development of professional skills to help with their search. Our Assistant Director for Career Advising and Assistant Director for Research and Service are available to help with that aspect of finding a good practice experience site including creating strong resumes and cover letters, writing professional emails, and developing other professional skills.

What happens if you can’t find a practicum site?

If you are finding it too challenging to find a site, step back and reevaluate. Also, keep an open mind. Some people have found their public health calling by stepping out of their comfort zones and trying something new. If the specific skills you want to acquire do not match what is available, take a calculated risk and try something different.

Make sure you keep your practicum coordinator in the loop as you plan. A practicum is a requirement for the MPH degree in any accredited school or program so you have to keep searching till you find one.

Previous Practice Experience Sites

View the following List of Previous Practice Experience Sites. Please note that this is not a comprehensive list and we cannot guarantee that the sites on this list are currently taking students. This list should only be used as an example of potential sites and projects. Keep in
mind that approval of sites on this list is based on the availability of an appropriate preceptor and project.

How to Find a Public Health Practicum Site

Everyone needs to complete a practice experience, but finding a practicum site can be a challenge. Recently we sat down with Dr. Titilola Balogun to discuss best practices in finding a practicum site that fits your professional goals.

Begin with the end in mind

The number one piece of advice when thinking about your practicum placement is to think about what you want to do with your MPH. Looking for a practicum is very similar to searching for a job. Actually, it’s the exact same process – and in many cases, it’s easier to find a practicum than it is a job because many health departments and public health organizations are generally happy to have students willing to work in exchange for mentoring and a real-world experience.

Some opportunities are paid, but there is no guarantee of payment. In fact, the search for a practicum site is a good test run for actually looking for a public health job.

How to search online for a practicum experience

Be focused in your search. If you are looking for an advocacy-related practicum, for instance, search for jobs that do advocacy work. Do an actual search.

For example, search “advocacy, public health” in a job search engine. Within the job descriptions of the search results, look for the skills that are required for the positions. Those are the kinds of skills that you will want to acquire at your practicum site because those are the skills that you will need to land a job in advocacy.

Keep track of the skills required

Keep a running document of the skill sets that you identify as ones you will need for your ideal public health practicum experience or job placement.

If your interests lean toward more quantitative skills, and if you are someone who likes data, health departments are a good source for those types of jobs. Or if you were interested in epidemiology, you could search for ‘epidemiologist’ to find job openings in your area. Look for the skills required for the position, and you will almost always see skills related to proficiency with SAS or STATA or other quantitative skills. Those would be the kind of skills you would want to focus on for your practicum.
Approaching a site

As you identify your desired skill sets, if you find that an organization of interest does not have any internship opportunities posted, you can still reach out and say something along the lines of ‘As part of the requirements for my MPH, I need to complete a practicum. These are the skills I have and these are the skills I would like to acquire at your site. Do you have any openings for an intern?’

Align with your interests

Getting a practicum that aligns with your interests is important because your interest will drive your motivation to do excellent work. If you are new to public health, your classmates and teachers are your first professional public health network. Don’t be afraid to bounce ideas off them and ask about potential opportunities. This helps with relationship building as well as career advancement.

Competitive edge

Your practicum does count as public health experience and should be included in your resume. The unique skills you acquire during the experience can give you a better chance of standing out to an employer in a wide field of job applicants with public health degrees. Avoid simply looking for the most convenient opportunity you can find. Go the extra mile to seek out sites that do high-quality work.

When to look

It is never too early to start planning your practicum. The sooner you begin the better.

We recommend beginning your search no later than six months before you are scheduled to begin your practicum semester to avoid frustration. This gives you and the site time to review the requirements, clarify the expectations and complete all the paperwork. You need to secure a practicum location and turn in all completed and signed paperwork before you will be cleared to register for the course.

Some students are able to find a site that’s a great fit within a few weeks of searching, but for the vast majority of students finding a placement takes much longer. So, again, the sooner you start searching the better. Keep in mind that you need to plan your life, your job, take time off of your work – and all of that takes time.

The bottom line

In a nutshell, to find a good practicum placement, start as soon as possible. Know what you want to do, compile a list of skills you’ll need, network with public health professionals, make other connections through conferences and industry mixers, and use your online resources.
We are here to help

Taking advantage of available resources is key to a successful practicum search. Reach out to your Practicum Coordinator. They are more than happy to walk along with you during every step of your practicum search.

Required Forms

Throughout the MPH practicum, there will be many forms you will need to fill out. NOTE: Not every student will be required to fill out every form. Please ensure you are working with the MPH coordinator regarding which are required for YOU. The forms that are required on a case by case basis have been indicated with an asterisk (*).

Here is a checklist divided up by which of the 599 series courses you will submit the paperwork during.

**PH 599A:**
- *SIUC MPH Practical Experience Opportunity
- *Affiliation Agreement (AA) – also sometimes referred to as an MOU
- Public Health Routing Memo
- Applied Practice Learning Plan (APLP)
- Applied Practice Learning Plan Grid (APLP Grid)

**PH 599B:**
- Time sheets (240 hours signed by preceptor)
- Preceptor mid-term evaluation
- Student mid-term evaluation
- Preceptor final evaluation
- Student final evaluation

**PH 599C:**
- ILE paper
- Final practicum evaluation
- Exit interview
Applied Practice Learning Plan (APLP)

The following pages include a template of the Applied Practice Learning Plan (APLP) that a student must complete in order to receive approval for the proposed practicum project. We recommend that the student and the preceptor complete the form together. The final submission will be submitted to the MPH practicum coordinator.

The PLP proposal defines the goals, objectives, and deliverables of the practicum. It also outlines the roles and responsibilities of the student, preceptor, and the Southern Illinois University Carbondale Public Health Program. The purpose is to ensure that all parties understand and agree upon the practicum activities.

It is expected that you will work in collaboration with your preceptor to develop your PLP. You may discuss and/or share ideas with classmates, but each student must independently complete and submit their own PLP in order to meet the practicum requirement.
Master in Public Health (MPH)
Student MPH Applied Practice Learning Plan (APLP)

1. **Student contact information**
   
   Name:
   
   Email:
   
   Phone:

2. **Preceptor contact information** *(resume/CV required)*

   Name:
   
   Degree(s)/certification(s):
   
   Email:
   
   Phone:

3. **Organization information**

   Name of organization:
   
   Address of organization:
   
   City:
   
   State:
   
   ZIP:
   
   Country (if outside the USA):
   
   Website:
   
   Type of organization *(health department, non-profit, research, advocacy, healthcare, etc.)*:

4. **Field experience information**

   Position Title *(e.g., research assistant, program evaluation intern, field assistant)*:
   
   Start date:  
   
   End date:  
   
   Mid-point report submission date:  
   
   Final report submission date:
Practicum Project Information

1. Practicum project title:
   (List the title of the practicum project. If your project does not have a defined title, please come up with a one-sentence title that describes your project.)

2. Describe how the project is public health focused:

3. Practicum description: Project aim:
   (Describe what the project aims to accomplish in 1-2 sentences.)

4. Practicum description: Project goals and objectives:
   (List the specific project goals and objectives (2-5 recommended). If you are unsure about the specific goals and objectives for your project, please discuss with your preceptor.)

5. Short description of your specific contribution to the goals and objectives of the project:
   (Describe your distinct role in the project.)

6. List of your anticipated duties:
   (Examples: conduct literature review of surveillance programs for health condition, execute data analysis to identify trends in utilization of medication, write final report to synthesize data, track current health policy trends, review similar programs to adapt for new program)

7. Description of anticipated final deliverables:
   (Identify the ≥ two final products that you will develop for the organization.)
MPH Competencies

Identify the MPH competencies related to your experience: (Check the five competencies – minimum of three foundational. You will develop specific learning objective for each of the selected five competencies.)

MPH Foundational Competencies

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

Care Systems
- Compare the organization, structure and function of health care, public health and regulatory systems across national and international settings
- 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
- Assess population needs, assets and capacities that affect communities’ health
- Apply awareness of cultural values and practices to the design or implementation of public health policies or programs
- Design a population-based policy, program, project or intervention
- Explain basic principles and tools of budget and resource management
- Select methods to evaluate public health programs

Policy in Public Health
- Discuss multiple dimensions of the policy-making process, including the roles of ethics and evidence
- Propose strategies to identify stakeholders and build coalitions and partnerships for influencing public health outcomes
- Advocate for political, social or economic policies and programs that will improve health in diverse populations
- Evaluate policies for their impact on public health and health equity

Leadership
- Apply principles of leadership, governance and management, which include creating a vision, empowering others, fostering collaboration and guiding decision making
- Apply negotiation and mediation skills to address organizational or community challenges

Communication
- Select communication strategies for different audiences and sectors
- Communicate audience-appropriate public health content, both in writing and through oral presentation
- Describe the importance of cultural competence in communicating public health content

Interprofessional Practice
- Perform effectively on interprofessional teams

Systems Thinking
- Apply systems thinking tools to a public health issue

SIUC MPH Concentration Competencies
- Analyze health disparities and social determinants of health among rural and/or underserved populations.
- Identify the challenges and evaluate community-based partnerships as applied to rural and/or underserved populations (e.g. the Illinois Counties in the Delta Regional Authority).
- Plan interventions to improve health in rural, underserved and/or veteran populations.
- Describe and demonstrate the methods of spatial analysis, focusing on rural and or underserved regions.
Identify and make accessible community resources related to a specific health issue or a specific target audience (e.g. veterans).

**Practicum Learning Objectives**

Create *specific* learning objectives for your practicum experience. Your learning objectives need to align with *each* of the competencies you selected.

Think carefully about:
1. What you hope to gain from the practicum experience,
2. The competencies you selected on the prior page, and
3. How you will accomplish your practicum learning objectives.

**Example Learning Objectives:**

**Competency:** Foundational competency #9: Design a population-based policy, program, project, or intervention

**Sample specific practicum learning objective:** Develop my program planning skills by working with the organization to create an educational program that expands the scope of paramedics to safely divert patients from the emergency department.

**Competency:** Foundational competency #4: Interpret results of data analysis for public health research, policy or practice Public Health & Health

**Sample specific practicum learning objective:** Integrate the skills I am learning in my public health analytics and epidemiology courses to interpret the results of data analysis on enrollment in the Jackson County Health Department’s health insurance program to help develop policy recommendations for the health department.

**Please note:**
- The SIUC MPH Program requires ≥240 hours of practical experience and the completion of two tangible products/deliverables to be completed by the student.
- An Educational Affiliation Agreement must be completed/on-file between SIUC and the site before a student may start.
- For all questions regarding the practicum, please contact Kristen Brewer (Kristen.brewer@siu.edu).

I agree to the terms set forth in this agreement.

**Signatures:**

______________________________ Preceptor
______________________________ Student
______________________________ Advisor