Careers in Public Health

Public Health may be at times misunderstood because the field can be difficult to define. Public health spans from almost every aspect of human life and its collective social systems; from disease prevention to health promotion, epidemiology, community health, and policy development. As a result, there is a large and diverse number of occupations which fall under the umbrella of public health. These roles can include the familiar public health roles such as epidemiologist or health educator to the less commonly thought of careers such as social marketers looking into public health advertising or youth workers focused on substance abuse or homelessness prevention. Public health professionals play a critical role in monitoring and supporting population health, meaning there is a strong demand for individuals to enter the field.1

As public health is such a broad field, individuals will often find it difficult to identify a position or sub-field they are interested in pursuing. Public Health practice tends to fall within three domains; the improvement of health, the improvement of services and the protection of health2, which can be further simplified into the categories of protection, promotion and prevention. Those individuals interested in applying for positions within the field should take the time to research these domains so they are aware of what to expect as many positions will require tertiary qualifications in a public health specialisation. While undergraduate degrees may be specialised or focused on a particular stream, this is particularly true for studies at the postgraduate level. Concentrations in public health can be focused on epidemiology and biostatistics, while others fall into the realm of health promotion, environmental health, global health, infectious disease control, and community or policy development. While it may be difficult for some to choose a specific specialisation area, this will help job seekers narrow down what opportunities to look for.

**Do I need a degree to work in Public Health?**

While it is possible to gain employment in public health related areas without specific qualifications, opportunities for increased salary and career advancement are greatly improved with tertiary qualifications.

**Many jobs state I need experience, how do I get experience?**

Many jobs will state that you need experience prior to applying, this can be difficult when you are trying to enter the field. There are many ways to get experience other than through paid employment, this includes internships, volunteering or through personal endeavours such as starting a blog or a local NGO to showcase your skills.

**Where are public health jobs available?**

Those wishing to pursue a career in public health can work in a variety of settings including:

- State and Commonwealth Government
- Schools and Universities
- Hospitals and medical centres
- Community centres
- Non-profit and International organisations
What are some common public health jobs?

- Community health worker
- Disease and infection investigator
- Environmental health specialist
- Epidemiologist
- Global health professional
- Occupational health and safety specialist
- Food inspector
- Urban planner
- Health educator
- Emergency preparedness and response coordinator
- Public health policy coordinator
- Research analyst
- Public health physician
- Public health nurse

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References:
