



**NMHealth**



**Career  
Guide**



**Check It Out!**



# What is Public Health?

The New Mexico Department of Health (NMDOH) is in charge of public health throughout the state. It provides services that meet the needs of different communities and uses up-to-date information to tackle various issues, including environmental and health-related problems.

An illustration featuring two stylized human figures in the lower-left corner. The figure on the left has dark hair, wears a green jacket over a white shirt, and a thick orange scarf. The figure on the right has dark hair, wears a green beret, an orange long-sleeved shirt, and green pants. They are set against a background of radiating white lines and a purple dotted pattern. A large white speech bubble with a black outline is positioned to the right of the figures, containing text.

**There are a variety of career paths available within public health.  
Let's explore!**

# Table of Contents

**Epidemiology**      **Pages 4-7**

**Public Health  
Nursing**      **Pages 8-10**

**Social Work**      **Pages 11-15**





# Epidemiology

Epidemiologists are scientists who study how diseases start and spread. They also find ways to prevent or control them. There are different areas of focus within the field of epidemiology in public health.



## **Applied Epidemiologists**

often working for state health departments, respond to disease outbreaks, figuring out their causes and helping to stop them from spreading.

## **Research Epidemiologists**

Research epidemiologists study diseases in labs and in real-world settings to learn how to prevent future outbreaks.



Epidemiologists can specialize in subjects like environmental health, infections in hospitals, community health, reproductive health, long-lasting diseases, infectious diseases, and preparing for public health emergencies, among other areas.

# Epidemiologist Career Pathway

Career pathways vary significantly; often, individuals take breaks or return to previous aspirations.

**High School Diploma**



**Bachelor's degree**



While most NMDOH epidemiology positions require a master's degree, there are other related roles you can explore with your bachelor's.

**Master's degree**



Epidemiologists hold a master's degree which can vary from public health, social work, and statistics, amongst others!

# Degrees in Epidemiology

Many epidemiologists often have a Master of Public Health degree and may also have degrees in areas like social work, statistics, biology, or environmental sciences. There's no single right degree for these jobs. Since there are many different areas in epidemiology, it's important to have experts from various fields.

A **Bachelor of Public Health** is a 4-year college degree that teaches students how to protect and improve the health of entire communities. They study topics like how diseases spread, the impact of pollution on people's health, and ways to make communities healthier through education and policy changes.

A **Master of Public Health (MPH)** is a graduate degree that focuses on the science and practice of protecting and improving population health. It builds on what you learned in your bachelor's degree by offering advanced training in subjects like how diseases spread (epidemiology), using statistics to understand health data (biostatistics), global health issues, and health policy.



# Epidemiology Specialties

Specialties within epidemiology vary. Many aspects of epidemiology impact us, such as access to care, clean water, health communications, preventative care data, health systems, and injury and behavioral health data. These factors influence our everyday lives and communities.

As a result, we can implement changes, develop policies, and communicate important resources and events happening around us.

## Some specializations include:

- Environmental epidemiologists
- Community health equity epidemiologists
- Mental health epidemiologists
- Injury and behavioral health epidemiologists
- Occupational health epidemiologists
- Health systems epidemiologists



# Public Health Nursing

Public health nursing focuses on keeping whole communities healthy, rather than just individual people.

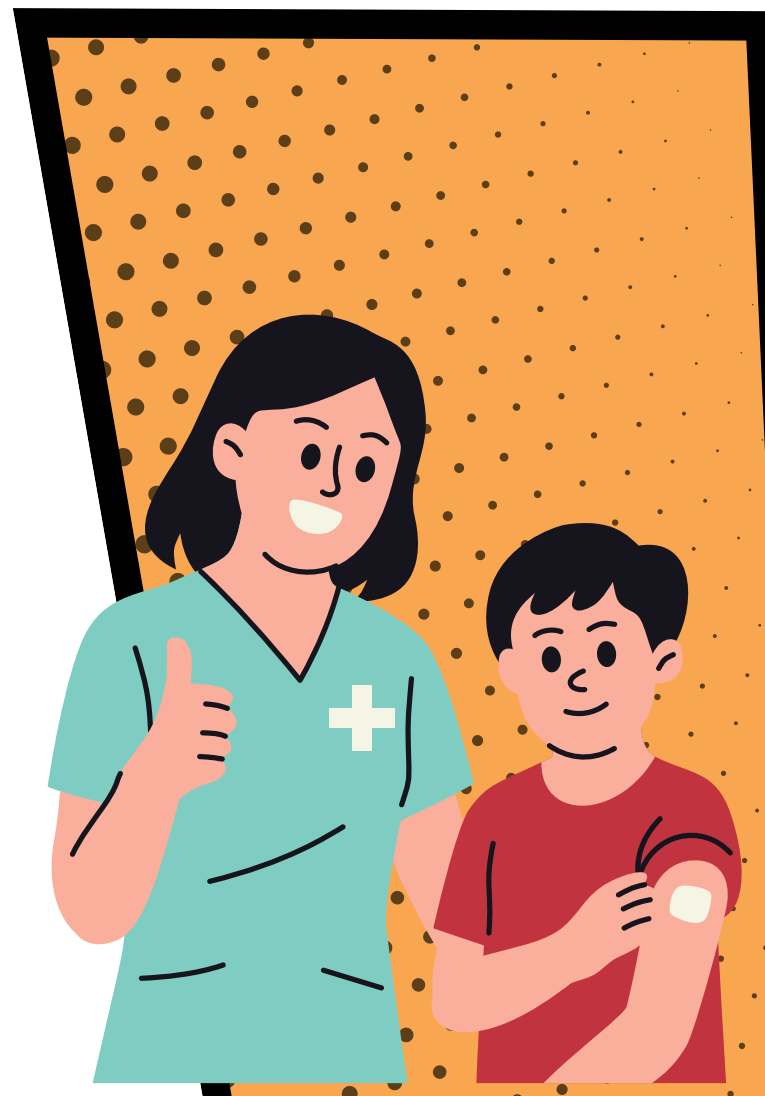
These nurses work in places like schools, neighborhoods, and clinics to stop people from getting sick, encourage good health habits, and teach everyone about living healthy lives.

## What are Public Health Nurses?

Public health nurses work to improve the health of whole communities. They help create health policies, prevent and manage contagious diseases, and provide importance services like immunizations, reproductive health care, and harm reduction.

## Why it Matters!

- They help people stay healthy by understanding and improving their communities.
- They build trust by working directly with families, schools, and local organizations.
- They ensure everyone can access healthcare, regardless of where they live or their financial situation.
- During outbreaks or natural disasters, public health nurses are often among the first to help communities recover.
- They collaborate with doctors, scientists, and other health experts to create programs that save lives.



# Public Health Nurse Career Pathway

There isn't just one straight path to becoming a public health nurse. Students can choose to get an Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN), a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN), or even go further to become a Nurse Practitioner (NP) as part of their education journey.

**High School Diploma**



**Associate Degree  
in Nursing**



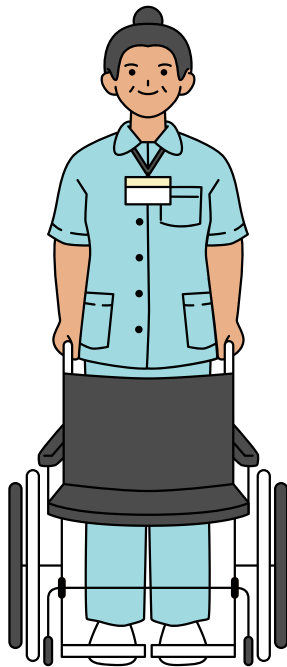
**Bachelor's Degree**



**Practitioner's Degree**



# Nursing Degrees



## Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN)

This is a two-to-three-year college program that prepares students to work as a registered nurse (RN). Students get hands-on experience in real clinics and develop important skills for taking care of patients.

## Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN)

This four-year college program trains students to become a registered nurse. As a BSN nurse, students prepare to take care of patients, promote healthy behaviors, and prevent diseases in settings like hospitals, clinics, and communities. Students will study subjects including biology, anatomy, nursing care, and public health and will also practice skills through clinical rotations in various healthcare settings.

## Nurse Practitioner (NP)

To become a nurse practitioner (NP) students must obtain a BSN and complete a graduate level nursing program (master's or doctoral) focused on nurse practitioner training. Additionally, students must pass a national NP board certification exam. An NP is a highly trained registered nurse that can diagnose illnesses, prescribe medications, and manage patient care.



# Social Work

Social workers are professionals who help families find the support, services, and resources they need. Social workers consider all aspects of a person's life including emotions, social, and financial needs.



# Social Work Career Pathway

Career paths can be very different for everyone; sometimes people take breaks or go back to what they wanted to do before. This guide shows the different options available for anyone interested in a career in social work.

## High School Graduation/GED Congratulations!

### Licensure and Certification

- After completing an MSW, graduates need to pass the Licensed Master Social Worker (LMSW) exam in New Mexico to practice social work.
- With experience, social workers can pursue the Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) credential for advanced clinical roles.

### Employment Opportunities

#### BSW? What? Huge Accomplishment!

After getting a Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) degree, graduates can look for beginner jobs in areas like social services, public health, or child welfare as they work toward their master's degree. Some might also choose to take a year off to gain experience in the field.



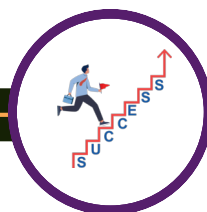
BACHELOR'S  
*Degree!*

### Pursue a Bachelor of Social Work (BSW)

Look at the university resources for more information.



### Pursue a Master of Social Work (MSW)



### Employment

Graduates can apply for social work jobs in public health agencies, such as Children's Medical Services. In these roles, they can assist families by organizing care, speaking up for their needs, and managing services.

# Social Work Degrees

**Bachelor of Social Work (BSW):** A BSW is the minimum requirement for most social work positions. This degree prepares individuals for practice positions where they can engage with clients, assess their needs, and monitor their progress.

**Master of Social Work (MSW):** This program offers advanced training in social work, focusing on areas like public health, mental health, and child welfare. It also has a special track for students who already have a Bachelor of Social Work (BSW).

## Career Pathways

### Clinical Social Worker

Offers therapy and counseling to people, families, and groups who are facing mental health issues.

### School Social Worker

Assists students with their emotional, social, and academic challenges by collaborating with teachers, families, and school staff.

### Medical Social Worker

Helps patients in hospitals and healthcare settings by providing access to resources, offering counseling, and planning for when they leave the hospital.

### Child Welfare Social Worker

Helps kids and their families stay safe and healthy. They often work with foster care and adoption services.



# More Career Pathways

**Substance Abuse Counselor** – Assists people dealing with drug and alcohol problems by offering support, creating treatment plans, and suggesting additional help.

**Geriatric Social Worker** - helps older people and their families deal with issues related to aging, such as healthcare, finding a place to live, and providing emotional support.

**Community Outreach Worker** – Works in non-profits and organizations to connect people with community services, such as food assistance and housing.

**Policy Analyst** – Advocates for laws and policies that support social justice and community well-being.

**Substance Abuse Counselor** – Assists people dealing with drug and alcohol problems by offering support, creating treatment plans, and suggesting additional help.

**Geriatric Social Worker** - helps older people and their families deal with issues related to aging, such as healthcare, finding a place to live, and providing emotional support.

**Community Outreach Worker** – Works in non-profits and organizations to connect people with community services, such as food assistance and housing.

**Policy Analyst** – Advocates for laws and policies that support social justice and community well-being.

**Crisis Intervention Specialist** – Provides immediate support to individuals in emergencies, such as domestic violence survivors or people experiencing homelessness.

**Probation Officer** – Helps people on probation reintegrate into society by providing counseling and monitoring their progress.





Public health is a field that impacts our daily lives, yet many people are unaware of the exciting career opportunities it offers. Public health careers are exciting, impactful, and fulfilling. Public health needs you, your ideas, your passion, and your commitment to improving health outcomes for New Mexicans. We hope this career guide inspires you to join us in making a difference!

Learn more at

[\*\*www.nmhealth.org\*\*](http://www.nmhealth.org)





**NMHealth**