



PRACTICE EXPERIENCE HANDBOOK

PUBH 6800

Public Health Practice and Community Engagement Office

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LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY HEALTH NEW ORLEANS

School of Public Health

Mission

The mission of the LSUHSC School of Public Health is to advance the public's health and well-being through education, research, and service with a focus on issues affecting Louisiana.

Vision

To become nationally recognized as an inter-disciplinary community of outstanding teaching and research scholars and professionals who educate, innovate, and improve the public's health and well-being.

Core Purposes

- High quality public health education
- Innovative high impact research
- Community service through public health advocacy, collaboration, and practice

Values

- Engaging in professional behavior that incorporates honesty, integrity, fairness, respect, and resilience
- Reducing health disparities and optimizing health and well-being for all
- Demonstrating an enduring commitment and drive to be the best, including creativity and innovation
- Embracing the contributions of diverse cultures, backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives
- Responding to community needs through collaboration

Master of Public Health Competencies

Students are required to meet at least five competencies, three of which must be foundational competencies, during their practice experience. These competencies will be included on the student's *Practice Experience Proposal* form, the planning document for the practice experience.

Foundational Competencies

Upon completion of the five MPH core courses, Biologic Basis of Health, and Research Ethics, students should be able to:

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

Public Health & Health 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

Program Specific Competencies

In addition to the required school competencies, students must also satisfy program-specific competencies for their chosen program.

Behavioral and Community Health Sciences Program Competencies

- Prioritize individual, organizational and community concerns, assets, resources and deficits for social and behavioral science interventions and policy change.
- Design, implement and evaluate public health programs, policies and interventions.
- Analyze the role of individual, social and community factors in both the onset and solution of public health problems through intervention or policy change.
- Evaluate evidence-based approaches in the development and evaluation of social and behavioral science interventions, studies and programs.
- Examine the cultural, social, and behavioral determinants of health and health disparities.
- Prepare approaches to health promotion issues that take into account cultural differences.

Biostatistics Program Competencies

- Explain the role that probability and statistical distributions play in inferential statistics and decision-making.
- Advise researchers and public health professionals on translating research questions into testable hypotheses to advance public health.
- Prepare appropriate analytic approaches for public health research questions, use corresponding statistics method to test the null hypotheses, and draw conclusions based on the testing results.
- Selectively apply hypothesis tests for comparing treatment strategies and exposure groups appropriate to the type of response measurement (e.g., binary, ordinal, continuous).
- Perform power analysis and sample size calculations to aid in the planning of public health studies.
- Communicate to colleagues and clients the assumptions, limitations, and (dis)advantages of commonly used statistical methods and describe preferred methodological alternatives when assumptions are not met.
- Use computer software for acquisition, management and analysis of data and presentation of results.
- Create and present oral and written reports of the methods, results and interpretations of statistical analyses to both statisticians and non-statisticians.

Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences Program Competencies

- Collect, analyze, and interpret environmental and occupational health outcomes data.
- Examine the direct and indirect human, ecological, and safety effects of environmental and occupational exposures in order to protect the health of workers and the public.
- Evaluate biological, genetic, physiological, and psychological factors that affect human susceptibility to adverse health outcomes following exposures to environmental and occupational health hazards.
- Select appropriate human health risk assessment methods for a variety of environmental and occupational data.
- Recommend corrective strategies for mitigating and preventing environmental and occupational exposures that pose human health and safety risks.
- Exhibit knowledge of federal and state regulatory programs, guidelines, and authorities appropriate to environmental and occupational health and safety.
- Apply risk management and risk communication methodologies to address issues of environmental justice, equity, and policy.
- Propose environmental and occupational health promotion and injury prevention strategies for communities and workplaces.

Epidemiology Program Competencies

- Estimate advanced epidemiologic measures for descriptive and etiologic studies.
- Examine basic ethical and legal principles pertaining to the collection, maintenance, use and dissemination of epidemiologic data.
- Inspect the processes involved in the design, analysis and evaluation of an epidemiologic study.
- Appraise the direction and magnitude of bias on measures of association and draw appropriate inferences from epidemiologic data.
- Apply biological principles to development and implementation of disease prevention, control, or management programs.
- Identify the principles and limitations of public health screening programs.
- Employ statistical computer packages to calculate and display descriptive statistics.
- Analyze categorical data for case control and cohort studies and perform multiple logistic regression analysis and describe the essential elements of survival analysis.
- Examine data for confounding and effect modification, and handle appropriately.

-Evaluate the strengths and limitations of epidemiologic reports and be able to communicate epidemiologic information to lay and professional audiences.

Health Policy and Systems Management Program Competencies

-Apply quality and performance improvement concepts to address organizational and systems performance issues and use "systems thinking" for solving organizational problems.

-Demonstrate leadership skills in public health and communicate health policy and management issues, using appropriate channels and technologies.

-Appraise the current issues in planning, resources allocation, and financing and their effects on consumers, providers, and payers in a health system.

-Analyze the impact of political, social, and economic policies on health systems at the local, state, national, and international levels and formulate solutions to key problems.

-Select evidence-based principles, law and ethics to critical evaluation and decision-making in health care delivery.

-Propose policy development, analysis, and evaluation processes for improving the health status of populations.

Practice Experience

Overview

The MPH Practice Experience is a project or activity that immerses the student in one or more aspects of public health operations under the guidance of a preceptor. It gives the students an opportunity to apply what they are learning in a professional public health setting, while building skills, abilities and relationships. In addition, students' experiences may inform their future academic and professional plans.

This fieldwork may include, but is not limited to, community education, health promotion, program planning, program organization or management and/or grant writing. The practice site criteria include organizations, centers or programs (governmental and non-governmental organizations) devoted to the health of populations through the delivery of health services, prevention of disease, promotion of health education, and/or advocacy for health care programs and service delivery.

Students earn 3 credit hours for their practice experience by registering for PUBH 6800 Practice Experience during the semester in which they do their fieldwork.

Acceptance of Students for Practice Experience

1. Students must successfully complete at least 10 credit hours including
BIOS 6100 or 6200 core
EPID 6210 core
ENHS 6238, BCHS 6212, or HPSM 6268 program-specific core.
2. Students must successfully completed HIPAA training.
3. Students must successfully completed CITI training.
4. Students must successfully completed SPH Code of Conduct.
5. Students must have at least a 3.0 overall grade point average.

The deadline for completing the practice experience proposal and related forms is generally in the middle of the semester before the practice experience takes place. The practice experience office will provide specific proposal due dates when they become available.

This handbook, as well as approved practice sites and forms are available at <http://sph.lsuhsu.edu/practice-experience>. *Students should read this handbook before talking with their advisors since s/he is responsible for the various requirements contained herein.* In addition to their advisors, students are encouraged to contact the Practice Experience Office if they have any questions.

Course Director

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Planning

Each fall and spring semester, the school will offer an informational meeting to review the purpose and process of the practice experience to assist the student. Students are required to attend the meeting the semester before they intend to enroll in the practice experience. Students who are planning for a practice experience in the fall should attend the spring meeting. Details about the meeting will be emailed to MPH students.

Students shall meet with the Practice Experience Office in advance of the practicum semester. **This meeting should take place within the first three weeks of the semester preceding the semester when the student is registered for the practice experience.** The meeting is designed as a planning session for the practice experience to review goals, deliverables, course requirements, secure practice experience site, and complete affiliation agreements when needed.

Students should share this handbook with their preceptors to orient them to the practice experience. Checklists for preceptors and students to use for planning and conducting the practice experience are included in this handbook in the appendix.

Site Selection

Students should select a practice experience based on their academic program, previous work and academic experience, and career interests. Their advisors can offer insight on potential sites, as well as preceptors and available projects. When identifying the best semester for the student's practice experience, the advisor and student should also keep course load, personal needs, and other interests of the student in mind. Students can begin discussions with their advisors about the practice experience as early as their first semester; however, they must submit the paperwork by the deadline in the semester prior to registration.

A practice experience must take place at an approved practice site. The student should consult the SPH-approved practice sites list on the [practice experience](#) webpage, and meet with his/her advisor for assistance. The Practice Experience Office also is available for guidance on choosing a site, and may be able to locate additional sites that meet students' interests. Contacts on the placement list will be familiar with the practice experience, and students should contact them directly to see if the site has any current openings or needs. In general, a student may not use their current work position as their practice experience. A student considering a practice experience at their current employment must consult the course director.

International sites provide a rewarding experience and are encouraged. However, it is the student's responsibility to work closely with the Practice Experience Office throughout the process to explore if the site and preceptor can be approved. Political security and health status of the country and air/ground travel itself are examined during the process. Additional paperwork may be required. *For all of these reasons, it is pertinent that the student make initial contact early.*

If the student decides on a site that has not been previously approved, the student should contact the Practice Experience Office so they can work together on placement site and preceptor approval, including the *New Practice Site Approval* form.

Practice placements should be outside the LSUHSC School of Public Health, as required by the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH). This policy promotes the exposure of students to new working environments, organizations, programs, and projects, as well as helps them form relationships with professionals in their fields of interest. The exception to this is university-

affiliated public health practice programs with significant community engagement. See the Practice Experience Office for more information or approval.

Preceptor

Once the site is approved, the preceptor must be identified. The preceptor mentors the student and oversees the practice experience. He/she also will be responsible for assessing the student's progress and performance. The student's work style and interests should be complementary to his/her preceptor's, and fit with the site's work environment.

The preceptor must be a practicing public health professional who meets the following educational/professional criteria:

- MPH (or equivalent degree) plus three years professional public health experience, or at least five years of professional public health experience
- Approachable, competent in mentoring, interested in the student's academic career goals
- Close family members or friends of the student **may not serve** as the student's preceptor.

Preceptors that have not been previously approved must be approved by the course director.

The preceptor must have expertise in the selected public health area and meet the above qualifications in order to serve as mentor and supervisor. Approval is a simple process. The practice experience director reviews the resume/CV of each potential preceptor to assess his/her qualifications. Should someone not meet the above criteria, the practice experience director can grant an exception based upon their academic and professional background.

Students should share this handbook with preceptors to orient them to the practice experience. Checklists for preceptors and students to use for planning and conducting the practice experience are included in this handbook.

Preceptor's Role and Responsibilities

- Orient the student to the organization's goals, structure, internal communication and partners.
- Make him/herself available to student.
- Provide oversight, guidance, and adequate resources to facilitate completion of the agreed upon activities. Invite and encourage the student to learn new skills, and attend meetings, trainings, and other events that will enhance the learning experience.
- Integrate the student with regular staff and introduce the student to others who can assist with career opportunities.
- Provide direction to supplemental resources, opportunities for networking, and career advancement.
- Provide periodic feedback and guidance to the student in writing and/or through meetings, and through the progress report and final evaluation.
- Contact the Office of Practice Experience, as needed.
- Work with the student to complete their progress report after 100 hours have been completed.

-Assess the student's performance and complete the Evaluation of Student form and submit it to the SPH in a timely fashion at the end of the practice experience.

Proposal Development

Once the preceptor is approved, the student then schedules a meeting with the preceptor to outline the practice experience project, including competencies, deliverables "products", work activities, start and end dates, and work schedule, which will be documented on the *Practice Experience Proposal* form.

Placements that are clerical, clinical, or mostly observation or shadowing are not allowed.

Preceptors should review their organizations' policies and expectations applicable to the student. In addition, the preceptor should review this handbook in its entirety and consult with the practice experience course director or coordinator for additional details, as needed.

Proposal Form

The *Practice Experience Proposal* form has several sections that must be completed. In order to prevent having to redo the form, the course director recommends that students submit a draft of the form **before** asking for their preceptors' signatures.

Competencies

The proposal includes a minimum of five competencies, three of which must be foundational competencies, which the student will meet by the end of the practice experience. Students must choose among the competencies listed in the *LSUHSC School of Public Health MPH Competencies* section of this handbook.

Deliverables "Products"

Deliverables are tangible and functional products or a service that the organization can adopt such as 1) operation manual 2) data dictionary 3) strategic plan based off an organization self-assessment 4) SAS Code 5) data analysis report or 6) policy brief. Each deliverable "product" must coincide and be paired with the competencies chosen to be covered during the student's practice experience. Deliverables "products" must be turned in at the end of the semester to be added to students' portfolio.

Work Activities

For each deliverable, list the specific activities and tasks that the student will undertake during the practice experience to execute the deliverables. Work activities are 1) an entire project in an area of public health practice (fulfilling one of the core functions of public health: assessment, policy development, or assurance) or 2) Individual activities as components of a large project.

Start and Finish Dates

Practice experiences must be completed within the semester the student is registered for PUBH 6800; semester-specific start and end dates will be provided by the course director. Only students who meet one of the following criteria may opt to complete their practice experiences over two semesters.

- Work full-time (pay stub or written letter from supervisor must be submitted)

-In a joint degree

-Practice experience is part of a formal internship that crosses semesters.

Work Schedule

The student's weekly work schedule should be documented on the form. It should allow for sufficient time for the student to complete the required 200 hours and complete all work activities.

Memorandum of Understanding

The *Memorandum of Understanding* form is signed by both the student and preceptor. It defines the roles and responsibilities of both parties and is submitted along with the student's proposal.

Submitting Forms

The student must submit completed and signed *Practice Experience Proposal* and *Memorandum of Understanding* forms to the Practice Experience Office by the announced deadline for proposals, which is generally in the middle of the semester before the practice experience takes place. The course director of PUBH 6800 will provide specific proposal due dates when they become available.

Students whose practice experiences placement sites and/or preceptors have not been previously approved must also submit the appropriate forms for new sites and preceptors.

Student Portfolio

The use of an academic portfolio will be required throughout the practice experience. All course work will be stored in the portfolio in a thoughtful, organized, and deliberate manner. Much of the content will be comprised of documents created by the practice experience office, completed by students, then signed and approved by the student, preceptor and occasionally the course director. At the end of the semester, all of the student's work and completed deliverables "products" will be stored in the portfolio for course director review, approval, and grading. OneNote will be the platform used for student portfolios. Once a student begins the practice experience proposal, the coordinator will invite the student to the course director managed practice experience portfolio.

Research Approval

Since practice experiences are by nature practice-based, Institutional Review Board (IRB) is generally not needed. However, should a student need IRB approval for a component of their practice experience, the student must see to it that they follow the [LSUHSC Institutional Review Board's](#) procedures. While securing the site, the student must initiate conversation with the practice experience course director and proceed with the correct course of action for approval through the LSUHSC SPH Research Office. In some cases, the student will need to obtain IRB approval from both LSUHSC and the organization where the student is placed. Should the topic of research surface in any way during the practice experience, it is the student's responsibility to contact the practice experience course director immediately and provide details before proceeding.

Registration

A copy of all required, approved *Practice Experience Proposal* and *Memorandum of Understanding* forms must be on file with the Practice Experience Office by the proposal deadline before a student is allowed to register for PUBH 6800 Practice Experience. In addition, if the student's practice site and/or preceptor are new and have not been previously approved, the student, also must submit a *New Site Approval* form, and preceptor's CV/resume. Deadlines for completing those forms are generally in the middle of the semester before the practice experience takes place, and specific deadlines are announced as they become available.

Since PUBH 6800 is a restricted course, students will need permission codes to pre-register online. After the course director approves all of a student's practice experience forms, she will send him/her a permission code.

If the student does not register, no credit will be granted, regardless of whether an experience occurred.

Publication Approval

Information on publication is included in [LSUHSC Chancellor Memorandum 33 \[CM 33\]](#)- *Policies and Procedures Governing the Supervisory Role of the Institution over Student Activities Including Student Publications*, which addresses the rights, responsibilities and limitations of students who wish to publish material while at LSU Health Sciences Center.

Questions/Further Assistance

A list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) is included as Appendix E. If you need additional assistance at any time please contact Ms. Brown, Coordinator, Public Health Practice & Community Engagement.

Completing the Practice Experience

Evaluating the Experience

The student must submit the following to the course director by the semester deadlines posted on the course's Moodle site. Student may email them or drop off hard copies in the course director's mailbox. Review them with preceptor before submitting and get required signatures.

Any time the student and/or preceptor have problems or questions during the practice experience, they should contact the course director. If the course director is not available, they should contact the SPH's Coordinator of Public Health Practice & Community Engagement.

Mid-Semester Progress

The student submits the *Practice Experience Progress Report* and *Student Work Log* of hours to date. If the student's practice experience has changed from the approved proposal, the student should document these changes on the Practice Experience Progress Report. If these changes vary greatly from the original approved proposal, the course director may ask the student and his/preceptor to complete a revised proposal form.

Final Reports

Near the end of the practice experience, check with the preceptor concerning the *Evaluation of Student* form they are to complete and submit. The form must be completed and emailed directly by the preceptor to the SPH Office of the Practice Experience by the semester deadline posted on Moodle.

The student completes a *Student Work Log* for the second half of the semester and the *Evaluation of Practice Experience* form. In addition, the student submits a final paper in which he/she reports and reflects on his/her experience. Guidance on writing the final paper is available online.

Course Grade

The practice experience course director issues a grade of Pass or Fail grading based upon completion of 200 hours and the above instruments, as well as submission of the original paperwork. Additional information on course evaluation is included in the PUBH 6800 syllabus.

Site Review

At least annually, the SPH's Coordinator of Public Health Practice & Community Engagement will assess each site's participation status, available preceptors, and public health disciplines needed. The evaluations by students will be reviewed to monitor the public health suitability, adherence to approved proposals, appropriate supervision, and workplace safety. The school posts the current list of approved practice experience sites on the [practice experience webpage](#).

Appendices

Preceptor Checklist

- Orient the student to the organization's goals, structure, internal communication and partners.
- The student is expected to show respect and courtesy toward all staff (including the preceptor, other staff and interns), clients/patients and their families, and community partners.
- The student is expected to use discretion in timing questions and discussions with the preceptor. It is often best to have such conversations (express any concerns or disagreements) in private, not in the presence of other staff and/or clients/patients.
- The student is must respect any and all confidences revealed including data on individuals, social information, records, fee systems and professional policies. No mention may be made of confidential or proprietary information to any individual not directly involved.
- Technology Policy – The student is responsible for adhering to all policies for the organization regarding use of electronic devices (texting, tweeting/Facebook, cellphones, surfing the web, playing a videogame, email, etc.).
- Attendance Policy – The student is responsible for adhering to the agreed-upon schedule. He/she should be punctual and should not leave before the agreed-upon time, without first checking for permission from the preceptor.
- Dress Code: The student must exhibit a professional appearance both in manner and dress and must follow the professional standards of behavior expected in the work environment.

Student Checklist

Practice Experience Planning

Confirm all eligibility requirements are met.

- At least 10 credit hours including BIOS core, EPID core and your program core completed before practice experience begins.
- Successful completion of HIPAA and CITI training, and the SPH Code of Conduct.
- Good academic standing.
- One or two semester in before the practice experience takes place, under the guidance of the academic advisor; identify the semester in which to conduct practice experience.
- Identify an agency, program, or organization with a qualified preceptor for your placement.
- The student's advisor, another faculty member, or the practice experience coordinator may help the student identify a site.
- The site and preceptor must be approved by the course director.
- Create a proposal that reflects your interests and goals.
- Meet with the preceptor to develop deliverables and identify competencies and the activities that will meet your goals and the needs of the site.
- The student confirms them with the practice experience course director.
- The preceptor and student finalize the plan, and both sign the *Practice Experience Proposal and Memorandum of Understanding* forms.
- Submit the signed *Practice Experience Proposal and Memorandum of Understanding* forms to the Practice Experience Office before the proposal deadline.
- Register for PUBH 6800 Practice Experience.

During the Practice Experience

Complete the required mid-semester reports and submit them to the Practice Experience Office by the deadline posted on the PUBH 6800 Moodle site. Review them with preceptor before submitting and get required signatures.

-Practice Experience Progress Report & Work Log of hours to date.

Near the end of the practice experience, check with the preceptor concerning the *Evaluation of Student* form they are to complete and submit. The form must be completed and emailed directly by the preceptor to the SPH Practice Experience Office by the semester deadline posted on Moodle. Complete the following by end of semester deadline posted on Moodle, and submit them to the Practice Experience Office.

-Work Log for the second half of the semester

-Evaluation of Practice Experience form

Frequently Asked Questions

When do I begin the practice experience?

As a minimum requirement, all MPH students must successfully complete at least 10 credit hours including BIOS core, EPID core and your program core before beginning their practice experience. Students are strongly recommended to take more courses before engaging in their practice experience. Students also must complete HIPAA, CITI and SPH Code of Conduct, as well as be in good academic standing.

Can I waive a prerequisite or complete one at the same time as my practice experience?

Prerequisites are preparation for practice experience and cannot be waived or taken during the practice experience.

Can I do my practice experience over two semesters?

Practice experiences must be completed within the semester the student is registered for PUBH 6800. The only exceptions are for students who meet one of the following criteria; these students may opt to complete their practice experiences over two semesters.

- Work full-time;
- In a joint degree program (e.g. MD/MPH); or
- Practice experience is part of a formal internship that crosses semesters.

How and where do I start?

Talk with your advisor about when you will be eligible to begin the practice experience.

Discuss with your advisor what options are available to you. (You are responsible for identifying and securing an appropriate project with specific competencies and learning objectives, and project activities.)

Is it necessary to get my advisor's approval to begin the practice experience?

Yes, it is absolutely necessary so s/he can continue tracking your progress through your academic degree program. You should talk with your advisor prior to planning your proposal and make sure your advisor is aware of your final plans.

How do I find a practice placement?

Review the [online](#) list of school-approved sites. Also, talk with your advisor, other faculty and students who have completed their practice experience requirement, and the course director for help.

Can I conduct my practice experience out of the country?

Yes, if the site, preceptor and country are approved. Check with the practice experience office regarding your interest early. Additional paperwork may be requested.

Can I do my practice experience at the LSUHSC School of Public Health?

Practice experiences are done at outside of the school to give students exposure to different environments, projects and programs, and public health professionals. Regardless of where the practice experience is done, it must be at a school-approved site with a school-approved preceptor.

Do I register for the practice experience?

Yes, register for PUBH 6800 for the semester you are conducting your practice experience hours.

Can I still graduate if my practice experience isn't completed?

No, all MPH graduates must have met all requirements with documents completed and approved, before graduating.

What if I still have questions?

Contact Ms. Brown (abro49@lsuhsc.edu), Coordinator of Public Health Practice & Community Engagement. Her contact information is in the overview section of the handbook.

Where do I go if I'm not satisfied with my placement/preceptor?

Contact Ms. Brown. You may also want to talk with your advisor.

Acknowledgements

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