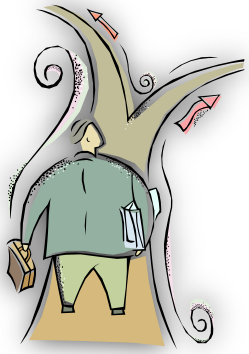
Health Education

CAREERS



What is Health Education?

Health education is an exciting and growing profession that can lead to jobs all over the world in public health agencies, voluntary nonprofit organizations, schools/colleges/universities, medical care settings, business/industry and more!

Health education is a social science that draws from the biological, environmental, psychological, social, physical and medical sciences to promote health and prevent disease, disability and premature death.

Health education positively influences the health behavior of individuals, groups, and communities, as well as the living and working conditions that influence their health.

Health education requires intensive specialized study. Members of the profession may belong to a health education professional organization and are committed to a code of ethics.

Health education can include health promotion, wellness, health consumerism, and patient education.

Is Health Education Important?

Yes! Health education improves the health status of individuals, families, communities, the state, and the nation.

- It improves the quality of life for all people.
- It saves and reduces premature deaths.

By focusing on prevention, it saves money that individuals, employers, families, insurance companies, medical facilities, communities, the state, and the nation would spend on medical treatment.

Training

Over 250 colleges and universities in the U.S. offer undergraduate BA or BS degrees in health education or similarly titled majors to prepare students for health education careers, or graduate studies. Many colleges and universities offer master programs (MA, MS, or MEd degrees) in school or community health education, health promotion and other related fields.

About two dozen schools of public health offer master of public health (MPH) programs with community health education concentrations. Doctoral degrees (PhD, EdP, or DrPH) in health education are available across the country.

Degree programs may be accredited by the National Council on the Accreditation of Teacher Education, the Council on Education in Public Health, and/or the Society for Public Health Education and the American Association for Health Education (SOPHE/AAHE) Baccalaureate Program Approval Committee.

Certification

Health education teachers in public schools are certified by individual states. This is done by the State Department of Education which allows individuals to instruct students in the K-12 setting.

Nationally, credentialing as a Certified Health Education Specialist (CHES) is available by examination from the National Commission for Health Education Credentialing, Inc. (Phone: 888.624.3248 Website: wvw.nchec.org)

Where Would I Work?

- School health educators promote student, staff, and community wellness. Primarily, school health educators provide classroom instruction for students in grades K-12 in public and nonpublic schools. As part of the coordinated school health team, school health educators develop and deliver instructional programs that enable students to meet the Comprehensive Health and Physical Education Core Curriculum Content Standards. They work in concert with physical education specialists, school nurses, counselors, classroom teachers, administrators, and parents to support the acquisition of important life skills that enable students to choose a healthy lifestyle. School health education programs focus on the knowledge and skills necessary to develop health literacy.

- In schools and colleges, you may be involved in projects related to community health, consumer health, disease prevention, emotional health, environmental health, family life/sexuality education, first aid, safety (including personal safety) and disaster preparedness, substance abuse prevention, human growth and development, positive body image and nutrition.

- School health educators holding Department of Education administrative endorsements and employed as supervisors may supervise instruction, evaluate staff, provide administrative direction for curriculum and assessment, oversee budget development, write and implement grants, and evaluate school-based programs and services.

- Working on a college/university campus health educators are part of a team working to create an environment in which students feel empowered to make healthy choices. They identify needs; do community organizing: teach whole courses or individual classes; develop mass media campaigns; and train peer educators, counselors, and/or advocates.

- In companies, health educators perform or coordinate employee counseling as well as education services, employee health risk appraisals, and health screenings. They design, promote, lead and/or evaluate programs about weight control, hypertension, nutrition, substance abuse prevention, physical fitness, stress management and smoking cessation, develop educational materials, and write grants for money to support these projects. They help companies meet occupational health and safety regulations, work with the media, and identify community health resources for employees.

American Association for **Health Education**

- In health care settings health educators educate patients about medical procedures, operations, services and therapeutic regimens, create activities and incentives to encourage use of services by high risk patients, conduct staff training and consult with other health care providers about behavioral, cultural or social barriers to health, promote self-care, develop activities to improve patient participation in clinical processes, educate individuals to protect, promote or maintain their health and reduce risky behaviors, make appropriate community-based referrals, and write grants.

- In community organizations and government agencies health educators help a community identify its needs, draw upon its problem-solving abilities and mobilize its resources to develop, promote, implement and evaluate strategies to improve its own health status. Health educators do community organizing and outreach, grant-writing, coalition building, advocacy, and develop, produce, and evaluate mass media health campaigns.

What Do Health Educators Do?

Assess Individual and Community Needs

Develop Health Education Programs

Plan Health Education Programs

Coordinate Health Education Programs

Implement Health Education Programs

Manage Health Education Programs & Personnel

Write Grants

Build Coalitions

Identify Resources

Make Referrals

Develop Mass Media Campaigns

Organize/Mobilize Communities for Action

Handle Controversial Health Issues/Content