



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**TENNESSEE**  
KNOXVILLE

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DEPARTMENT OF  
PUBLIC HEALTH

# **Guidelines for Master of Public Health Field Practice**

MPH Concentrations include:

- Community Health Education (CHE)
- Health Policy and Management (HPM)
- Veterinary Public Health (VPH)

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## Forward & Contact Information

MPH Field practice is a 360 hour work experience enabling graduate students to develop public health competencies while contributing to projects that benefit the organization. It is considered a vital component of the graduate program in Public Health at The University of Tennessee. Affording the MPH student a positive opportunity for the integration of theory and practical experience requires a planned joint effort between the Public Health Program and the participating organization. Close collaboration between the academic program and the practice setting will enhance the quality of the learning experience and the professional growth and development of the student as well as ensure that the student has the opportunity to contribute to the mission of the field organization. This document is intended to facilitate development of individualized, in-depth field practice experiences.

Field practice serves as a major laboratory in which academic knowledge, skills, and professional experience are coordinated and expanded in a meaningful and functional manner. As a significant culminating graduate experience, field practice permits the student to demonstrate communication skills, to apply knowledge independently, and to interact with other professionals in the organization. Students who have completed field practice are highly enthusiastic about the many benefits of the field involvement and are eager to share their experiences with others. Additionally, students have found that the inclusion of the field practice component in the MPH curriculum strengthens their competitive ranking for employment, following graduation.

The internship may be completed as a full-time block experience for a period of nine weeks or as a part-time involvement extending over a longer period of time. The latter approach typically requires 22.5 hours per week for a full semester of sixteen weeks. The 360 contact hours are viewed as the minimum needed to satisfy the MPH field experience requirement. Field time may be increased beyond the minimum if mutually agreeable to the field organization and to the student intern.

We extend our sincere appreciation in advance for the preceptor's willingness to participate in an important facet of graduate education. Without the preceptor, field practice would not be possible.

MPH Faculty  
The University of Tennessee

### Contact Information

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# Master of Public Health Program

## ***Mission***

The Graduate Public Health Program at The University of Tennessee provides quality education and leadership to promote health in human populations through interdisciplinary instruction, research and community service.

## ***Vision***

The MPH Program is recognized for its empowerment of students pursuing public health careers which focus on community health improvement.

## ***Goals***

The goals of the Public Health Program reflect the major functions of the program and assist in the attainment of the mission and movement toward the vision. The goal statements are linked to instruction, research, and service.

Instructional Goal: Preparation of future professionals competent in public health core content and methodological approaches.

Research Goal: Public health faculty and students engaged in research projects that address health concerns and community health improvement and add to the knowledge base.

Service Goal: Public health faculty and students engaged in community, government, and professional service to benefit populations at the local, state, and national levels.

## ***Program Values***

1. **Respect** - To engage in experiences that obligate a person to take responsibility for the public's good, to recognize human dignity, and to value the worth of individual and collective behaviors.
2. **Holistic Consideration** - To emphasize a socio-ecological systems approach for understanding and promoting optimal health and well-being of individuals, families and communities.
3. **Excellence** - To commit to highest quality in teaching-learning and in practice.
4. **Collaboration** - To advocate networking, partnering, consensus building and participatory approaches for improving population health.
5. **Diversity** - To recognize the benefits of diverse ethnic and cultural perspectives and prepare culturally competent public health professionals.
6. **Equity** - To promote equality of opportunity for individuals, families and communities.

# Guidelines for MPH Field Practice

## I. Field Practice and the Master of Public Health Curriculum

- A. Field practice is a very important component of the MPH program because it allows application of academic theory, concepts and skills in a realistic setting. Field experience also expands the student's understanding of the variety of organizations engaged in health-related activities.
- B. Although primarily a learning opportunity for which the public health intern earns six (6) semester hours of credit (PH 587-88), the field practice program is beneficial to a participating field organization in that a placement:
  - 1. allows the organization to contribute to professional preparation of MPH students.
  - 2. provides additional personnel resources for the completion of special projects.
  - 3. offers the organization the fresh perspective of the public health intern.
  - 4. develops a working relationship between the field organization and the University of Tennessee.
- C. Field practice requires that the student be involved in the work of the field organization on either a full-time basis (40 hrs/wk) for nine (9) weeks or on a part-time basis (22.5 hrs/wk) for the sixteen (16) weeks of a semester. The exact calendar dates are arranged between the public health intern and the field organization and must be communicated to the Field Practice Coordinator (FPC) (or faculty advisor if VPH). The public health intern's role is typically that of "staff assistant" in the field organization.
- D. An additional three (3) semester hours of credit (PH 589) may be earned by those participating in an approved extended placement. An "extended placement" is defined as a full-time placement involving a minimum of twelve (12) weeks or a placement involving relocation.
- E. Stipends, although not required for field organization participation, are welcomed because the intern may need to relocate. Stipend amounts vary based on the type of organization, typically ranging from \$1,000 to \$7,200, with an average of \$3,500. On average, approximately sixty percent of placements are funded by the organization.
- F. MPH students usually complete field practice during the last semester of study; however may vary based on concentration and/or dual degree status. Approval is required by advisor and field practice coordinator. Students must have earned an overall grade point average of 3.0 or higher.
- G. Public Health interns are matched with field organizations on the basis of the student's academic and prior work experience, individual interests, and professional needs. The field organization may interview the student and retains the right of final approval of each intern placement.

## II. Field Practice Goals and Objectives

- A. The general goal of the field practice is to strengthen the student's public health competencies and understanding of a particular area of public health. This is achieved by familiarizing the intern with the:
1. Practice of public health to help the intern identify with the profession of public health.
  2. Organizational and administrative dimensions of public health.
  3. Functional activities and involvements of a specialty area of public health.
- B. The following specific objectives guide progress toward the general goal. Planned experiences should contribute to the student's general preparation by offering the intern an opportunity to:
1. Apply knowledge and skills within the framework of an appropriate field organization through:
    - a. Experience in working with and without supervision within the assigned organization.
    - b. Exploration of the general operations of the organization.
    - c. Examination of the organization's responsibilities and constraints.
    - d. Exposure to various staff, board or community meetings.
    - e. Working with the organization's various publics and programs.
  2. Increase self-confidence in one's ability through:
    - a. Involvement in planning, organizing, or implementing activities or projects.
    - b. Involvement in evaluation activities and self-evaluation.
    - c. Involvement in data collection and research investigations, as applicable.
    - d. Involvement in facilitating group process.
    - e. Involvement in report development.

### III. Responsibilities of the UT Department of Public Health

- A. The Field Practice (FP) coordinator in consultation with faculty (or faculty advisor if VPH) will contact potential field organizations to determine their willingness to host a student during a specific period of time.
- B. Upon notification that a field organization is willing to accept a public health intern, the FP coordinator in consultation with faculty (or faculty advisor if VPH) will:
  - 1. Determine the student(s) best suited to the expressed needs of the field organization.
  - 2. Work with the field organization to develop a satisfactory plan of learning objectives and activities for the public health intern.
  - 3. Send an official letter confirming placement (to be completed usually two months prior to the start of the desired field practice period.)
  - 4. Visit the field organization, typically at midpoint, to discuss progress with preceptor and intern. Out of town site visits may be conducted via Zoom video call.
  - 5. Secure appropriate University signatures if contractual agreements are required.
- C. The FP coordinator will orient students to the purpose of field practice and its role as an integral part of the MPH degree curriculum. In addition, the FP coordinator in consultation with faculty (or faculty advisor if VPH) will:
  - 1. Share preliminary information relating to possible field practice sites.
  - 2. Guide the student in selecting Public Health Competencies (Appendix A) to develop during field practice and assist in the selection of a field organization able to provide the desired experiences.
  - 3. Provide and explain "Field Practice Check List."
  - 4. Discuss with the student a format for the development and submission of field practice reports, including written objectives with related competencies, Field Practice in Action write-up, and final field practice presentation.
  - 5. Discuss the method of evaluation of student performance.
  - 6. Indicate the continuing availability of the FP coordinator and faculty advisor throughout the field practice period to confer regarding the student's learning experiences and progress toward objectives.
  - 7. Review the preceptor's evaluation report, with follow-up discussion with the student. The evaluation is included in the student's permanent academic record.

## IV. Responsibilities of the Field Organization

- A. Accepts responsibility for collaboration with the UT Department of Public Health in providing field practice for a specific public health intern for a designated period of time and in so doing, provides a designated student work space that offers the intern appropriate experiences to assist in professional development.
- B. Designates a field preceptor by name, business address, e-mail address, phone number, and academic degree(s) by completing a Preceptor Form. The preceptor should possess a graduate degree in public health or related field, or have equivalent experiences, ideally holding a supervisory position with decision making authority. A field preceptor shall be responsible for planning and conducting (in consultation with the FP coordinator or faculty advisor if VPH) the field practice experience. As well as performing this primary function, the field preceptor should:
  1. Assist the public health intern in determining specific, mutually agreeable, written objectives for the field experience.
  2. Orient the public health intern to the field organization's mission, programs, policies, and other information.
  3. Commit time for instructional interaction and dialogue with the intern (an average of at least 1 hour per week).
  4. Provide supervision of the public health intern's activities.
  5. Plan for a visit by the FP coordinator and/or faculty advisor during the field practice period, usually near midpoint.
  6. Review field practice reports, and, if indicated, resolve conflicts with field organization policy. A copy of the student's Field Practice in Action write-up will be emailed to you for approval to feature on the MPH website or other publicity materials (optional).
  7. Complete an online midpoint and final evaluation of the public health intern and discuss the ratings and comments with the intern. (A pdf evaluation form will be provided by UT Program for early reference; however, the actual evaluation is to be completed online).
  8. Share any comments and/or suggestions about the field practice program or the MPH curriculum with the FP coordinator or faculty advisor.
  9. If available, attend the student's culminating experience oral presentation on UT campus, typically held near the end of the semester.



## V. Responsibilities of the Student

### A. Before the Field Practice Period

1. Meet with intern coordinator to review requirements, revise resume, and discuss strategies for identifying appropriate field site, and submit a Request for Field Placement.
2. Provide a resume, cover letter, and field practice guidelines to prospective field sites. Communicate relevant courses completed and goals for the internship. Interview with preceptor. Forward preceptor the Preceptor Form to confirm placement.
3. Draft field placement objectives (major projects) using template provided.

### B. During the Field Practice Period

1. Follows policies, rules, and regulations of the field organization.
2. Maintains the same working hours as the organization's employees, if the student is scheduled full-time.
3. Obtains professional liability insurance coverage, if necessary and not provided by field organization. (Available by purchase from staff in 390 HPER.)
4. Seeks the field preceptor's guidance and appraisal of performance throughout the field practice period.
5. Shares with the field preceptor any feelings and ideas concerning the field practice as it progresses.
6. Plans for meetings with the field preceptor.
7. Plans participation in activities and secures approval of the field preceptor.
8. Participates in the field preceptor's planning for visits by the FP coordinator or faculty advisor.
9. Prepares a preliminary draft of the final field practice report and Field Practice in Action write-up and clears it with the field preceptor and/or other appropriate field organization personnel.

### C. After the Field Practice Period

1. Completes a Field Practice in Action write-up with photos and submits it to the FP coordinator and faculty advisor.
2. Completes final field practice report and submits it to the FP coordinator and faculty advisor.
3. Forwards letter of appreciation to the field preceptor.
4. Prepares a PowerPoint presentation that synthesizes major projects with public health competency development and career interests.

5. As a Culminating Experience, delivers PowerPoint oral presentation to faculty advisor, FP Coordinator, preceptor (if available), and other faculty and students.
6. Evaluates FP experience using the online student evaluation form.

## VI. Field Practice Reports

### A. Purpose of Field Practice Reports

1. To demonstrate an ability to communicate at a level appropriate to the degree.
2. To structure and organize the student's learning experience to enhance integration, synthesis and conceptualization of the field placement activities. (i.e., thinking through and putting various daily involvements into perspective)
3. To provide a permanent summary and record of the professional training experiences and exposures encountered while participating in field practice.
4. To enhance and strengthen the relationship of the field preceptor and the intern's FP coordinator and faculty advisor.

### B. Submission of Field Practice Reports

1. Upload all reports to Canvass site for review by FP coordinator U faculty advisor.
  - a. **Objectives.** Draft objectives are due before first day of field practice. Revised version of objectives are due by second week of field practice. Midpoint objectives are due at midpoint. Final evaluation of objectives are due during the last week of field placement. Note: Use the objectives template provided on Canvass.
  - b. **Weekly reports** should be maintained weekly. Use the Weekly Report Template. Continue submitting reports until you have completed all the required hours.
  - e. **Final Field Report:** Electronic version due by the last day of class unless prior arrangements are made. This report should be an organized compilation of project exhibits (appendices) with which the student had major or active input and should include copies any formal reports completed by you. Provide 8 - 10 pages of original narrative sharing a brief description of the organization, and your perspective on the internship in relation to past work experience, academic exposures and career interests. Field Practice in Action, objectives, and weekly reports must be included in the final report as appendix items. Hard copy due at oral presentation. Use binding other than three ring notebook. Use template and rubric provided. Recommended to upload draft to Canvass before printing.
  - f. **Field Practice in Action Write-up:** Due by the last day of class. Students fill out the template provided, which summarizes major projects, includes 1-3 personal quotes, a headshot, and 1-3 other images attached as .jpg files. Student and preceptor sign consent form on page 2.
2. To the Field Preceptor
  - a. Copies of all "official" reports submitted to the FP coordinator (at the field preceptor's discretion).
  - b. Project reports requested by the field preceptor.

# Appendix A: Public Health Competencies

## Core Public Health Competencies

Twelve key competencies that all MPH students are expected to achieve as a result of foundation and professional skill building field practices) components of the curriculum are listed by skill domain below:

### **Analytic Assessment Skills**

- 1.) Defines a health problem in a population
- 2.) Makes relevant inferences about patterns of health and potential causes from quantitative and qualitative data

### **Policy Development/Program Planning Skills**

- 3.) Collects, summarizes, and interprets information relevant to an issue
- 4.) Utilizes current techniques in direction analysis and health planning

### **Communication Skills**

- 5.) Leads and participates in groups to address specific issues

### **Cultural Competency Skills**

- 6.) Appraises the role of cultural, economic, social, and behavioral factors in determining the delivery of public health services

### **Community Dimensions of Practice Skills**

- 7.) Collaborates with community partners to promote the health of the population.
- 8.) Identifies community assets and available resources

### **Basic Public Health Sciences Skills**

- 9.) Identifies and applies basic research methods used in public health

### **Financial Planning and Management Skills**

- 10.) Manages programs within budget constraints

### **Leadership and Systems Thinking Skills**

- 11.) Evaluates internal and external issues that may impact delivery of essential public health services
- 12.) Facilitates collaboration with internal and external groups to ensure participation of key stakeholders

These indicator competencies are based on the Public Health Faculty/Agency Forum Final Report, and the work of the Council of Linkages between Academia and Public Health Practice, which defined competencies in terms of the widely-accepted Ten Essential Public Health Services.

## Competencies for Concentrations

### **Competencies: Community Health Education concentration of study**

Upon graduation an MPH/CHE graduate should be able to . . .

1. Assess health related data about social and cultural environments, and individual and community needs for health promotion.
2. Design community health promotion programs, strategies, and interventions consistent with specified program objectives.
3. Implement community health promotion programs, strategies, and interventions.
4. Conduct high quality evaluation and research related to community health promotion.
5. Serve as a community health resource person.
6. Effectively communicate health issues to various audiences.

### **Competencies: Health Policy and Management concentration of study**

Upon graduation an MPH/HPM graduate should be able to . . .

1. Identify the main components and issues of the organization, financing and delivery of health services and public health systems in the US.
2. Analyze effects of political, social and economic policies on public health and health care systems.
3. Contribute to the policy process for improving the health status of populations.
4. Apply the concepts of evidence-based public health in the practice setting.
5. Facilitate use of Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP) planning tool for improving community health.
6. Apply appropriate strategic planning methodologies and other decision support tools for competitive positioning of health organizations.
7. Apply change management and systems thinking theories of organizational structuring to modern strategic management practice.
8. Demonstrate leadership, team building, negotiation, and conflict resolution skills to build consensus, partnerships and coalitions.
9. Identify principles for managing human resources in health care organizations.
10. Apply performance improvement concepts to monitor and evaluate programs for their effectiveness and quality.

11. Link the budgeting process to program planning and management control.
12. Interpret financial statements, including statement of operations and balance sheet.

**Competencies: Veterinary Public Health concentration of study**

Upon graduation an MPH/VPH graduate should be able to . . .

1. Assess health related risks to individuals and communities with special attention to zoonotic and emerging diseases, foodborne illness and injuries associated with animals.
2. Communicate health risks to individuals and communities with special attention to zoonotic and emerging diseases, foodborne illness and injuries associated with animals.
3. Design, implement, and critically evaluate epidemiologic studies.
4. Apply techniques of surveillance, recognition, prevention, control and management of infectious diseases, with special attention to zoonotic and emerging diseases, food borne illnesses, and potential bio- or agroterrorism agents.
5. Evaluate intervention programs that aim to reduce health risks associated with foodborne illness, zoonotic or emerging diseases, or hazards associated with animals.
6. Outline the steps needed to ensure the safety and wholesomeness of foods of animal origin.
7. Identify community and governmental resources appropriate for addressing health needs.
8. Justify the need for public policy development based on scientific data.
9. Develop drafts of standard operating procedures or policies needed to safeguard the community.

## Appendix B: Evaluations

### Preceptor Evaluation of Intern

**Midpoint** – To be completed online by preceptors when the student finishes approximately half of their hours (i.e.-180 hours for a 360 hour standard placement or 240 hours for a 480 hour extended placement)

[https://utk.co1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_0ewpT77iYqvjxbf](https://utk.co1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_0ewpT77iYqvjxbf)

**Final** - To be completed online by preceptors during the student's last week of field practice. Preceptors are asked to discuss evaluation results with the intern.

[https://utk.co1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_5vjyADFG4rtpAFL](https://utk.co1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_5vjyADFG4rtpAFL)

### Student Evaluation of Field Practice Experience

To be completed online by students after finishing all field practice reporting activities, including the final oral presentation.

[https://utk.co1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_5vaiRqjT2IyuLRz](https://utk.co1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_5vaiRqjT2IyuLRz)