

VHRC

Together We Are Better!



Public Health[®]
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

What is a Public Health Nurse?


A public health nurse concentrates on the health of the public as a whole. Responsibilities are wide and far reaching, primarily focusing on prevention, promoting and protecting. They concentrate on communicable disease investigation, surveillance and control. In addition, they oversee and contribute to the Tuberculosis program and help organize and contribute to immunization clinics when appropriate. Education and consultation to the community, health care providers and other agencies, is also a responsibility. The educational and consultation opportunities may include developing, coordinating and implementing public health training and education as necessary, as well as blood pressure screenings and recordings for community health maintenance.

The public health nurse can lead and collaborate in programs directly addressing the needs of vulnerable high-risk community members. For example, post-overdose follow-up, Naloxone (Narcan) training and distribution, additional outreach, health and wellness activities including resource allocation (e.g., emergency supply allocation, COVID tests, menstrual products etc.). Other program involvement and activities can include maternal-child health and wellness education and resource allocation, tobacco use prevention, emergency preparedness planning, and general health and wellness promotion (e.g., pedometers for step counting etc.).

Public health nurses are also required to attend professional continuing education programs including seminars, training and conferences to remain up-to-date on current public health issues, principles and practices. Public health nurses conduct research, advocate and integrate sound evidence into population health initiatives.

A public health nurse is NOT the same as a visiting nurse, a home care nurse and/or a community town nurse. A public health nurse cannot provide individual services to residents and their clinical abilities are limited for a variety of sound reasons (e.g., legal, liability concerns, provider restrictions that closely monitor their scope). For example, they are not able to diagnose, treat or prescribe, assist with medication administration, post surgical care, bathing/toileting, etc. They are educated and trained to only participate in activities that have a global impact on health, working for the State with responsibilities at the local level.

Sincerely,


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The Valley Health Regional Collaborative, City of Greenfield, Leverett and Shutesbury Public Health Nurses

