

The Role of the Public Health Nurse in a Pandemic

These nurse leaders work on many levels to help limit the spread of COVID-19.

After World War II, President Harry S. Truman called public health nurses “one of the most important groups of health workers in the country.”¹ Today, as we wage a different kind of war, one against the coronavirus disease, the work of these public health professionals is more vital than ever.

“Public health nurses are on the front line of the public health crisis the world now knows as the COVID-19 pandemic. They serve on mobile strike teams investigating case-contacts, deliver education on self-isolation and quarantine through hotlines and home visits, and interpret the rapidly shifting guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). They are reliable and proven responders during infectious disease emergencies, providing safe, effective, and nondiscriminatory care to the communities in which they serve,” write Joyce Edmonds, Shawn Kneipp, and Lisa Campbell in “A Call to Action for Public Health Nurses During the COVID-19 Pandemic,” published in the journal *Public Health Nursing*.



Public health nurses may be the unsung heroes of the COVID-19 pandemic, working within communities to help prevent the spread of the disease through prevention, education, and screening. The Association of Public Health Nurses collaborated with other healthcare organizations to identify the numerous responsibilities of public health professionals during the disease outbreak. The list includes:²

Providing information on COVID-19 and nonpharmaceutical interventions.

Reassuring residents that fears are valid, but that panic should be avoided.

Offering the flu vaccine.

Providing education about prevention.

Working with local government to review and improve emergency operations plans.

Engaging key stakeholders to help support COVID-19 preparation efforts.

Reviewing CDC guidance.

Exploring how to support the needs of employees and high-risk populations in communities.

Developing plans to support homeless individuals, a highly vulnerable population.

Through their work in home health agencies, clinics, nonprofit organizations, schools, and government organizations, public health nurses are part of a community's first line of defense in the war against the coronavirus disease. You'll find these public health professionals working in roles that include:

Public health nurse manager or director

Manager or director of teams developing population-focused healthcare services

Outpatient clinic manager

Director of school nursing

Community center health coordinator

Director of disaster management and preparedness programs

Director of health education programs

Director/manager of maternal and infant public health nursing programs

If this is the kind of work that ignites your passion, position yourself for these and other careers by earning a Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) degree with a specialization in Public Health Nursing.

Walden University, a leader in graduate nursing education,³ offers an [online MSN degree program](#) that is accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE). CCNE is an autonomous accrediting agency that ensures the quality and integrity of baccalaureate, graduate, and residency programs in nursing.

When earning a degree from the MSN leader, you'll learn from 100% doctorally prepared faculty⁴ with real-world experience. You'll work in a flexible online learning environment that allows you to fit your studies into your schedule. And you'll collaborate with a diverse community of nurses from across the United States.

Walden's Public Health Nursing specialization can help transform you into a social change-maker who works to create equal access to quality healthcare, leading to healthier communities for all. This [master's in nursing](#) will help prepare you for leadership roles in assessing communities and populations, identifying high-risk populations, and developing culturally sensitive, acceptable, and realistic population-based nursing interventions.

Walden's offers three pathways to the MSN degree program with the [Public Health Nursing specialization](#), depending on your experience, previous education, and education goals. Choose from:

BSN to MSN: This track is for registered nurses entering the program with a [Bachelor of Science in Nursing](#) (BSN).

RN to MSN: This track is for registered nurses entering the program with a hospital diploma, associate degree in nursing, or bachelor's degree other than a BSN.

RN to BSN Accelerate Into Master's (AIM): This track is for RNs who hold a hospital diploma, associate degree in nursing, or bachelor's degree (other than BSN), and an active RN license. With this accelerated program, you can earn both your bachelor's and master's degrees in less time and at a lower cost than earning each degree separately.

A Walden Enrollment Specialist can answer your questions and help launch you on your way to joining what Truman called "one of the most important groups of health workers in the country," to help defeat disease outbreak of all kinds and become an effective advocate for your community.

Walden University is an accredited institution offering an online [Master of Science in Nursing](#) degree program with a [Public Health Nursing specialization](#). Expand your career options and earn your degree in a convenient, flexible learning environment that fits your busy life.

¹Source: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/phn.12733>

²Source: <https://www.phnurse.org/assets/COVID%2019%20Comms%20Tips.pdf>

³Source: National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) IPEDS database. Retrieved February 2020, using CIP codes 51.3801 (Registered Nursing/Registered Nurse); 51.3808 (Nursing Science); 51.3818 (Nursing Practice). Includes 2017–18 provisional data.

⁴100% of didactic faculty are doctorally prepared while clinical faculty are either doctorally prepared or are APRNs with many years of advanced practice training as a licensed NP.

Walden University is accredited by The Higher Learning Commission, www.hlcommission.org.