

Maine Public
Health Association

MENTORSHIP
PROGRAM



MPHA MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

The Maine Public Health Association (MPHA) is the state's oldest, largest, and most diverse association for public health professionals. We represent nearly 950 individual members and 80 organizations across the state. As a statewide nonprofit association, we advocate, act, and advise on critical public health challenges, aiming to improve the policies, systems, and environments that underlie health inequities – but which also have potential to improve health outcomes for all people in Maine. We are not tied to a national agenda, which means we are responsive to the needs of Maine's communities, and we take that responsibility seriously.

The mission of MPHA is to improve and sustain the health and well-being of all people in Maine through health promotion, disease prevention, and the advancement of health equity. MPHA is a statewide, non-profit membership organization that promotes a healthy Maine through advocacy, education, community connection, and coalition-building. MPHA implements the following strategies to achieve its mission:

- Provide leadership in public health;
- Advance local, state, and federal public health policy;
- Promote and provide public health training and education; and
- Recognize model programs and public health leaders in Maine.

MPHA's Mentor Program is an opportunity for MPHA members to grow professionally through skill attainment, knowledge building, and networking, while strengthening the overall public health workforce in Maine. Each cohort of mentors and mentees participates for one year, with a call for applications in October, and the program beginning the following January and running through December of that year.

The goals of MPHA's Mentor Program are to:

- Enhance the skills and knowledge of public health students and early career professionals;
- Provide learning and networking opportunities for mentors and mentees to enrich their relationships and learning; and
- Strengthen the public health workforce.

Mentoring IS: A commitment, being open minded, sharing an experience, improving communication skills, increasing networking opportunities, strengthening professional skills, and expanding one's learning.

Mentoring IS NOT: A guarantee of a job, internship or job recommendation, therapy, supervision, tutoring, effortless.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Application Process

Public health professionals interested in serving as mentors must complete an application describing their educational background, career experiences, public health topics they are willing to mentor on, skills they are willing to mentor on, and time available for meeting with a mentee.

Public health students and early career professionals seeking a mentoring experience must complete an application describing their educational background, career experience, if any, professional goals, public health topics they are seeking mentorship on, skills they are seeking mentorship on, and time available for meeting with a mentor. Applications must be submitted to the Maine Public Health Association by the designated date for the matching process and can be found in the appendix of this document and completed online via our [website](#).

Matching Process

Each mentor is assigned 1 mentee, unless they indicate a preference for more than 1 mentee. Mentors and mentees will be matched based on their applications, with a goal to align public health topics of interest and skill development sought. MPHA works to create the best possible matches.

Program Evaluations

Each Mentor Program participant will be asked to complete an evaluation at the end of the mentoring period to enable MPHA to obtain feedback and make improvements for the next cohort of mentors and mentees.

MENTOR OVERVIEW

Mentor Qualifications

Mentors are required to have at least 5 years of experience in the field of public health or a related field. Mentors must be current members of MPHA or will become members of MPHA by the start of the program and remain in good standing throughout the duration of the Mentor Program.

Mentor Expectations

- Fully engage with the mentee in a professional manner
- Establish goals and meet expectations with their mentee
- Serve as a role model, informal advisor, and resource
- Offer constructive feedback in a positive manner
- Communicate openly and honestly
- Attend all Mentor Program events
- Complete evaluations upon request by MPHA
- Contact the MPHA Membership Manager with questions or concerns

Benefits to Mentor

- Contribute personally to the development of a future professional and the public health workforce
- Improve communication and advising skills
- Develop skills in mentoring
- Recruitment of mentees to respective fields of work
- Share experiences
- Expand professional networks
- Acquire fresh enthusiasm for own professional career

Guidelines and Tips for Mentors

- Provide advice and suggestions regarding career development and opportunities within the public health field
- Assist the mentee with taking initiative in the relationship
- Offer advice in regard to the feasibility of educational and/or career goals
- Provide options and support, but not necessarily solutions
- Share applicable experiences
- Foster an environment of mutual trust and respect
- Facilitate learning
- Acknowledge mentee's contributions and progress toward goals
- Give specific and simple feedback, respectfully
- Encourage questions from the mentee
- Understand what the mentee would like to discuss
- Keep it positive and professional
- Appreciate and respect the mentee's time

MENTEE OVERVIEW

Mentee Qualifications

Anyone who feels that they would benefit from being a mentee is encouraged to apply! Often, mentees are pursuing a degree in the field of public health or a related field, or have recently entered the field of public health. Mentees must be current members of MPHA or will become members of MPHA by the start of the program and remain in good standing throughout the duration of the Mentor Program.

Mentee Expectations

- Fully engage with the mentor in a professional manner
- Establish goals and meet expectations with their mentor
- Prepare for each meeting with relevant questions or points of discussion
- Come to meetings with a positive mindset, ready to learn
- Follow through in between meetings on recommended tasks, as relevant
- Attend all Mentor Program events
- Complete evaluations upon request by MPHA
- Contact the MPHA Membership Manager with questions or concerns

Benefits to Mentee

- Receive guidance and gain practical resources
- Participate in discussion regarding career interests
- Make multiple connections within a broader network of the public health field
- Work directly and interact with a public health professional
- Connect education and training to professional experience
- Discuss a variety of public health careers and workplaces
- Ask specific questions
- Receive constructive feedback and advice for professional goals and skills
- Improve specific professional skills and knowledge
- Understand more specifically what to focus on for professional growth
- Explore professional development opportunities

MENTEE OVERVIEW

Guidelines and Tips for Mentees

- Discuss the experiences the mentor has had in the public health industry
- Be open to constructive feedback and discussion regarding educational and/or career goals, as well as alternative approaches
- Inquire about the mentor's place of work
- Ask questions about types of public health jobs
- Attend networking events or public health events with the mentor to learn more about the industry and opportunities in the field
- Be respectful and responsible
- Respond to messages from the mentor within 24 hours
- Ask the mentor for feedback, suggestions, strategies, and resources
- Show evidence of following through and utilizing advice
- Keep it positive and professional
- Appreciate and respect the mentor's time and send thank-you notes and emails

PROGRAM SCHEDULE

December-February

- Call for mentee and mentor applications
- Application open through early February

March

- Mentors and mentees are paired

March/April

- Mentor Program Kick-Off event – program begins with an informational and educational event
- Pairs hold initial meetings, set goals, and establish meeting expectations and schedules

June

- MPHA check-in on pairs

March-November

- Pairs meet according to their schedules
- Facilitated events and check-ins
- In October, current Mentor Program pairs are encouraged to attend the MPHA Annual Conference together

November

- Current cohort of Mentor Program ends; complete evaluation

SUGGESTED MEETING TOPICS

Initial Meeting

- Formal introductions
- Discuss backgrounds and career interests on both sides
- Discuss academic and professional goals, and establish goals for the relationship
- Discuss expectations
- Agree on a meeting schedule
- Determine the best method for communication

Final Meeting

- Discuss how the relationship has been beneficial
- Ask for or provide any final feedback
- Review goals and progress toward achieving goals
- Decide on the next form of the relationship, if any

Stages of Formal Mentoring Relationships:

1. Build the relationship - Exchange information and establish goals
2. Work toward goals and deepen the engagement
3. End the formal mentoring relationship and plan for the future

Additional Meeting Topics

Professional Service

- Professional organization and committee involvement

Personal Life Balance

- Discuss how personal and professional life can fit together
- Discuss strategies for time and relationship management

Professional Development

- Introduce to colleagues or contacts
- Review and provide feedback on mentee's resume/portfolio/CV
- Review mentor's resume/CV/portfolio
- Provide insight into mentor's public health experience
- Develop interviewing or informational interviews skills
- Provide guidance on seeking a job or postdoc
- Discuss public health fields (e.g., academia, non-profit, government, private sector, healthcare)

RESOURCES

PLANNING FOR AND DEFINING A MENTORING RELATIONSHIP NEW MENTEES

It is important to spend some time thinking about what you want out of your mentoring relationship(s). Since mentoring may involve both people you know and strangers, the most successful relationships happen when partners have thought through their definition of mentoring, and their own preferences and parameters for their relationships before embarking on such relationships.

Once you have defined for yourself what mentoring means for you, confer with your mentor and mentoring peers to see whether they share your view of mentoring. Having this initial discussion with your mentoring partners will help to avoid potential problems.

Common problems that surface in mentoring relationships are:

A. Miscommunication, lack of communication:

Mentees have been hesitant to “bother” their mentors with “silly questions” when they are obviously such busy people. Conversely, mentors who were not being asked for help did not want to interfere in their mentees’ lives by seeming pushy, and thus did not contact their mentees without express invitation. This concern for the mentoring partner’s freedom, time, and independence can lessen the impact and usefulness of the mentoring relationship. It is important for you to be proactive in your relationship with your mentors and your peers so that you get what you need. Your mentors cannot begin to help if they do not know your questions and concerns.

B. Expectations:

Mentees’ expectations for their mentors can be unrealistic. One or two mentors cannot be the only resource on every topic. Mentors should be able to admit they do not have expertise in a particular area but should then look for other people who might be an appropriate resource on that topic.

C. Realities:

Remember: if you have been paired with a stranger, this is a somewhat artificial way of establishing a relationship and means that, through no fault of the mentee or the mentor, some relationships may not gel as well as others. This possibility is much less likely if you begin your mentoring relationships with a frank and honest discussion about what you want and need, and have the mentors speak frankly about how they see the role of a mentor.

The following page is designed to help you think through what type of relationship you would like with your mentor.

RESOURCES

PLANNING YOUR MENTORING RELATIONSHIP

This worksheet is designed to help you plan your mentoring relationship.

A mentor might be defined as a(n):

- guide, trusted counselor
- advocate
- friend
- coach
- resource for information
- other?

Ideally, which of these roles do I see my mentor playing?

What types of issues do I want to discuss with my mentor?

The following list represents a compilation of possible activities, topics and mutual interests that are possible for exploration within a mentoring partnership. These are merely examples.

Professional Development

- Introduction to colleagues or contacts
- Critiquing mentee's resume/portfolio/CV
- Review of mentor's resume/CV/portfolio
- Insight into mentor's public health experience
- Developing interviewing or informational interviews skills
- Guidance on how to seek a job or postdoc
- Discussion of different sectors in public health (e.g., academia, non-profit, government, healthcare)
- Attend events and professional development activities together
- Job shadow

Professional Service

- Committee involvement
- Professional organization involvement

Personal Life and Balance Issues

- Discussion of how personal and professional life can fit together, and strategies for time and relationship management

What types of issues are off-limits in our mentoring relationship?

How often would I like to communicate with my mentor?