

Careers in Public Health



AMERICAN PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION
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If you went straight for the MPH without much prior work experience, you might start with an entry-level job at a health department or non-profit organization, in the \$30,000 to \$50,000 range. If you're interested in research, you might begin as a study coordinator at an academic center, making somewhere around the same amount. The low end of the scale for epidemiologists, which includes entry-level jobs, is about \$40,000 to \$50,000. Starting salaries at consulting firms are often higher, although it really depends on the firm and what knowledge and experience you have to offer.

Of course, you can do better as you go along, getting more experience and more responsibility. The median salary for an epidemiologist is above \$60,000, and top salaries can hit six figures. There are jobs in injury prevention advertised at \$70,000 to \$80,000. Health educators average about \$50,000 and the tip-top tier rises above \$80,000. Experienced industrial hygienists can make \$90,000 and more. The CDC has highly experienced public health advisors making over \$100,000. As for consulting firms, the Office of Career Services at Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health tells me that their MPH graduates are earning salaries ranging from \$50,000 to more than \$100,000, depending on prior experience, degrees, and the specific company.

And what if you're transitioning from another health-related career? Doctors and dentists who go into public health make comfortable salaries, although if you were a hot-shot surgeon or highly paid specialist, you can be pretty sure you won't be seeing that level of compensation again. Nurses are sought-after for a number of different public health jobs; whether you'll earn more, less, or the same depends on where you work and what you want to do.

Keep in mind that salaries vary a lot according to the area of the country, reflecting local budgets and differences in the cost of living. They can also differ from one organization to another. I know of one New York City nonprofit that pays a premium to be sure they get and keep good talent—and honor their employees' hard work. But I've also talked to people who willingly took a pay cut to work for a cause they believed in.