

HIRING THE RIGHT PUBLIC HEALTH PHYSICIAN: A GUIDE FOR PUBLIC HEALTH AGENCIES

All health care professionals (HCPs) play an important role in the health and well-being of communities. However, not all HCPs have training or experience in public health.

Public Health/Preventive Medicine physicians have the experience and training to provide transformational leadership areas across multiple operational sectors of public health agencies.

WHAT IS PUBLIC HEALTH & GENERAL PREVENTIVE MEDICINE?

- Public health and General Preventive Medicine (PH/GPM) physicians **graduated from medical school** and are certified in the specialty under the American Board of Medical Specialties or the **American Osteopathic Association**, similar to other common medical specialties, like family medicine, surgery, pediatrics, and OB/GYN.
- PH/GPM physicians can be either M.D. or D.O. and are board certified by the American Board of Preventive Medicine or the American Osteopathic Board of Preventive Medicine respectively.
- Physicians with this training are uniquely equipped to work across all levels of health care — from providing direct patient care at the frontlines to providing leadership across public health sectors and at all levels of government.
 - They have at least one year of training with direct patient care experience in a clinical specialty, and
 - **At least 2 months* in a government public health setting. (*Some elect to complete more time based on their career interests.)**
- Some residency programs exist within state or local health departments:
 - [California](#)
 - [Florida](#)
 - [New York City](#)
 - [Texas](#)
- Many residents are either current or former members of the military.
- Some preventive medicine physicians have chosen to do a PM/GPH residency after completing a different specialty residency.

ACTION ITEMS FOR HIRING MANAGERS

- ✓ **Build relationships** with [preventive medicine residency programs](#) (contact ACPM at info@acpm.org for a current list).
- ✓ **Plan** to reach out early — physicians typically begin looking for full-time positions at least a year before graduating.
- ✓ **Emphasize the benefits of working for a government agency:**
 - Networking with people from diverse backgrounds
 - Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF)
 - Retirement benefits: pension, 401(k), 457(b)
 - Varied clinical and non-clinical duties
 - Wide reaching community impact
 - Work-life balance (predictable and flexible schedules)



KEY IMPACT AREAS FOR PUBLIC HEALTH / PREVENTIVE MEDICINE PHYSICIANS



Clinical & Care Delivery Innovation

- Design, implement and evaluate population-based clinical care models and lead innovations such as value-based care initiatives, community-clinical linkages, and data-driven programs **Potential Roles: Director of Clinical Innovation and Community Health Integration; Clinical Services Director**



Assessment & Surveillance

- Combining public health experience and advanced knowledge in epidemiology and biostatistics with clinical expertise to inform key health care initiatives impacting populations while improving the health of individuals, families, and communities. **Potential Roles: Medical Director of Infection Control, Hospital Epidemiologist**



Accountability & Performance Management

- Assure quality and safety and lead implementation of proven tools in various health sectors, such as infection prevention, resource allocation, chronic disease management and performance management. **Potential Role: Chief Quality Officer**



Community Partnership Development

- Serve as natural allies for other physicians and health practitioners to help innovate, optimize metrics and improve and health outcomes. **Potential Role: Director of Population Health**



Health Equity & Access

- Understand of social determinants of health, providing a broader understanding of patient needs beyond their immediate health concerns. **Potential Role: FQHC Medical Director**



Leadership & Governance

- Inform government policy, direct outbreak responses, lead surveillance systems, and manage programs ensuring equitable access to care. **Potential Role: State or Local Health Officer, Public Health Commissioner, State Epidemiologist**



Workforce Development

- Preventive Medicine physicians' rigorous theoretical and applied public health training makes them highly effective in both clinical and community settings. Equipped to break down silos and integrate strategies across public health departments or even across sectors. **Potential Roles: Chief Wellness Officer, Director of Employee Health**



Policy Development & Support

- Preventive Medicine physicians inform legislation and regulatory strategies, ensuring policies are grounded in evidence, and to design solutions that promote equity and improve population health outcomes. **Potential Roles: Health Policy Advisor, Legislative Health Director**



Emergency Preparedness & Response

- Preventive Medicine physicians have additional training in effective, population-level medical responses to natural or human-caused disasters and disease outbreaks and routinely step into roles within an Emergency Operations Center. **Potential Roles: Medical Officer, Medical Director**



I've overseen surveillance systems that inform public health advisories and outbreak investigations, playing a central role in Alaska's COVID-19 response through testing, contact tracing, vaccination advocacy, and emergency planning. My preventive medicine training supports effective surveillance, outbreak control, and public health preparedness across the state."

Joe McLaughlin, MD, MPH, FACPM
State Epidemiologist and Chief
Alaska Section of Epidemiology, Alaska Division of Public Health



As Public Health Officer for one of the nation's largest counties, serving 2.5 million residents, I led our local H5N1 (Avian Flu) response in partnership with the Agricultural Commissioner, Environmental Health specialists, and Animal Services Department. Through a proactive and coordinated approach, we prevented further spread to animal reservoirs and prevented cases in humans. Our team was recognized by the County of Riverside for exceptional results achieved through teamwork."

Jennifer R. Chevinsky, MD, MPH, FACPM
Public Health Officer
Riverside University Health System /
Riverside County Department of Public Health



In our public health performance management system and culture of continuous quality improvement, all public health department programs set targets based on national or other relevant benchmarks, monitored indicators, and used evidence-based strategies for reaching targets. This reduced administrative costs, improved efficiency, and improved health results."

Wendy E. Braund, MD, MPH, MEd, FACPM
Former State Health Officer and Public Health Division Administrator
Wyoming Department of Health



As County Health Officer, I act as the physician ambassador for our health department, often speaking to the media about issues like measles outbreaks or cold weather dangers, or with community groups about healthy eating or vaccination. I supervise the medical examiner's office Emergency Medical Services administration, Public Health Emergency Preparedness, and overdose prevention and response work."

Richard Bruno, MD, MPH, FAAFP, FACPM, AAHIVS
Family & Preventive Medicine Physician
Health Officer Multnomah County Health Department, Portland, OR

