Social and Behavioral Sciences, M.P.H., Ph.D.

Degrees Offered

- Master of Public Health
- Doctor of Philosophy

Nature of the Program

MPH IN SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

The MPH degree with a major in Social and Behavioral Sciences (SBHS) addresses the behavioral, social, and environmental factors related to individual and population health and health disparities over the life span. Research and practice in this track contributes to the development, administration, and evaluation of programs and policies in public health to promote and sustain healthy environments and lives for individuals and populations.

A student who graduates with an MPH degree with a major in Social and Behavioral Sciences from WVU will be qualified to work and provide leadership in public health and research settings at national, state or local levels, or work in the public or private sector on health promotion program implementation and evaluation efforts.

PH.D. IN PUBLIC HEALTH SCIENCES (SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES MAJOR)

The mission of the Ph.D. in Public Health Sciences, Social and Behavioral Sciences Major, is to provide state of the art doctoral education in the theory and application of social and behavioral science to a select group of highly qualified and committed students desiring to transform public health. Our program trains students using a research intensive curriculum led by a distinguished faculty at the cutting edge of public health science. This program emphasizes both evidence-based, theory-driven primary prevention of disease and injury and health promotion research and practice. Graduates will complete their degrees with a competitive record of research achievement, ready to embark on high-impact research careers.

The curriculum is designed so that students receive a methodologically-intense training and one-on-one research experience with faculty in Social and Behavioral Sciences, typically over a three- to four-year period. The first years of the program emphasize research and statistical methods complemented by theoretical and process-oriented coursework relevant to Social and Behavioral Sciences. During the latter years of the program, students are engaged in their dissertation research while given the freedom to further diversify their training by choosing electives.

FACULTY

CHAIR

- Keith Zullig, Professor - Ph.D. (University of South Carolina)

PROFESSORS

- Linda Alexander - Ed.D. (University of Virginia)
- Geri Dino - Ph.D. (Kansas State University)
- Ranjita Misra - Ph.D. (Old Dominion University)

ASSOCIATE PROFESSORS

- Christiaan Abildso - Ph.D. (West Virginia University)
- Danielle Davidov - Ph.D. (West Virginia University)
- Alfgeir Kristjansson - Ph.D. (Karolinska Institute)
- Peter Giacobbi - Ph.D. (University of Tennessee)

ASSISTANT PROFESSORS

- Elizabeth Claydon - Ph.D. (West Virginia University)

TEACHING ASSISTANT PROFESSOR

- Audra Hamrick - MA (West Virginia University)
- Toni Morris - Ed.D. (West Virginia University)
ADJUNCT PROFESSORS
• Ahmed Aboraya - M.D. (Cairo University)
• Lesley Cottrell - Ph.D. (West Virginia University)
• Samuel Zizzi - Ed.D. (West Virginia University)

ADJUNCT ASSOCIATE PROFESSORS
• Joy Buck - Ph.D. (University of Virginia)
• Cindy Fitch - Ph.D. (Case Western Reserve University)
• Michael Mann - Ph.D. (University of Florida)
• Melissa Olfert - Ph.D. (Loma Linda University)

ADJUNCT ASSISTANT PROFESSORS
• John Blosnich - Ph.D. (West Virginia University)
• Michael Brumage - M.D., MPH (West Virginia University)
• Janie Leary - Ph.D. (West Virginia University)
• Thomas Sims - M.A. (Georgia State University)
• Megan Smith - Ph.D. (West Virginia University)
• Kimberly Williams - Ph.D. (McMaster University)

ADJUNCT INSTRUCTOR
• Frances Peterson-Burch - RN, BSN (West Virginia University)
• Janet Reger-Nash - M.S. (University of California)

RESEARCH ASSISTANT PROFESSORS
• Adam Baus - Ph.D. (West Virginia University)
• Traci Jarrett - Ph.D. (West Virginia University)
• Cecil Pollard - M.A. (West Virginia University)
• Samantha Shawley-Brzoska - Ph.D. (West Virginia University)
• Nancy O’Hara Tompkins - Ph.D. (University of Maryland)

FACULTY EMERITI
• William Reger-Nash - Ed.D. (West Virginia University)
• Pete Shaffron - Ed.D. (West Virginia University)
• Kenneth Simon - Ed.D. (Columbia University)

Admissions
If you are ready to apply to West Virginia University School of Public Health, the admissions team is here to assist you.

MASTER OF PUBLIC HEALTH (MPH) IN SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

ADMISSION GUIDELINES
• Baccalaureate degree from an accredited college or university with a preferred GPA of 3.0
• GRE scores of 146 (verbal), 144 (quantitative), 3.0 (analytical writing)
• TOEFL scores (minimum 550 paper-based) (minimum 213 computer-based). Internet-Based TOEFL (iBT) minimum score recommended for admission, which is an 80 (20 or higher in each of the four sections). The IELTS (minimum score 6.5) or PTE score of 53-55 can be used in lieu of TOEFL. International Students Only.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Our CEPH accredited Master of Public Health program participates in the Schools of Public Health Application Service (SOPHAS), http://www.sophas.org/. The MPH Admissions process has two steps. (1) All MPH applications must be submitted through the national SOPHAS service and (2) applicants must also submit a WVU Graduate application, https://graduateadmissions.wvu.edu/.

In addition to the application, applicants must submit to SOPHAS a statement of purpose and objectives, official GRE test scores, three letters of reference, a current resume/curriculum vitae, and all university transcripts. SOPHAS requires original transcripts from ALL U.S. and International institutions attended (even Study Abroad).
There is a SOPHAS application fee. Applicants must indicate their first choice of MPH major and may also indicate a second choice. A maximum of two choices is allowed.

- E-submit your application as soon as the applicant entered information is complete. Do NOT wait for SOPHAS to receive transcripts, recommendations or test scores.
- Plan Ahead! Allow up to 4 weeks for SOPHAS to verify grades, process, and mail your application to your designated institutions after your documents have been received.
- SOPHAS grants fee waivers based upon financial need for Peace Corps Volunteers, McNair Scholars, Gates Millennium Scholars Program, AmeriCorps, U.S., and International applicants.

Once the department has reviewed the SOPHAS application, students will receive a communication from the WVU School of Public Health regarding their recommendation for acceptance and instructions to complete the WVU graduate application and pay the application fee.

**Important:** When sending GRE scores for consideration for admission to WVU, please use the WVU School of Public Health College GRE code: 0157. This code MUST be used, otherwise, your GRE score will not be reported to SOPHAS and your application will be incomplete. Incomplete applications cannot be reviewed for an admissions decision. (Each program at West Virginia University has a specific code.)

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (PH.D.) IN PUBLIC HEALTH SCIENCES (SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES MAJOR)**

**ADMISSION GUIDELINES**

- A Master's degree in Public Health or a closely related field is strongly preferred. Exceptional applicants with a Bachelor's degree in a relevant field may also be considered.
- A minimum GPA of 3.0 is required, 3.5 is preferred.
- The following GRE scores are preferred: Verbal 150; Quantitative 155; and Writing 3.5.
- WVU requires international students to submit TOEFL scores. Preferred scores are as follows: 550 on paper-based; 213 on computer-based; and 80 on internet-based test. The IELTS (minimum score 6.5) or PTE score of 53-55 can be used in lieu of TOEFL.

**APPLICATION PROCESS**

Applying to the Ph.D. program is a two-step process in which prospective students first submit an application through the national SOPHAS service, [http://www.sophas.org/](http://www.sophas.org/). If you are accepted into the Ph.D. program by the School, the next step is for you to complete a WVU Graduate Application, [https://graduateadmissions.wvu.edu/](https://graduateadmissions.wvu.edu/).

The SOPHAS application requires:

- Official test scores
- Official transcripts from all US institutions attended
- A Personal Statement
- 3 Letters of Recommendation
- Current CV/Resume

Applicants must indicate their first choice of Major and may indicate a second choice (you are allowed a maximum of two choices).

There is a SOPHAS application fee. However, SOPHAS grants fee waivers based upon financial need for McNair Scholars, Gates Millennium Scholars, as well as for AmeriCorps and Peace Corps Volunteers.

**TIPS for completing the SOPHAS application:**

- APPLY EARLY! Allow up to 4 weeks for SOPHAS to verify your transcripts and test scores and send them to the Universities to which you have applied. Your application may not be reviewed if it does not contain verified transcripts and test scores.
- When submitting your GRE scores, [be sure to use the college code 0157 for the WVU School of Public Health](https://graduateadmissions.wvu.edu/). This code MUST be used so that verified scores are sent by SOPHAS to the WVU School of Public Health for review.
- Submit your application once you have provided the required information. DO NOT wait for SOPHAS to receive transcripts, recommendations or test scores prior to submitting your application.

**Personal Statement**

The Personal Statement is a critical piece of the application. The content of the Statement and the applicant’s writing skills will be evaluated in the admissions decision. The Statement should address the following in no more than 1000 words:

- What is it about Public Health that interests you?
- What is it about your selected major, specifically, that interests you?
• What are your career goals?
• What topics or areas of research do you wish to pursue and why? If you have identified a potential dissertation topic, briefly describe that as well.
• Which faculty members in the SPH do you see as being potential mentors to help you succeed in your area of interest?

Applicants should also include any additional information about their interests, background, prior experience, or special circumstances that may be helpful to the SPH Doctoral Admissions Committee.

Letters of Recommendation

Three letters of recommendation are required. At least two of these should be from people who can attest to your academic abilities.

Deadlines

Please refer to SOPHAS for the current deadline. New applications received after this deadline will not be reviewed. All admissions are for the Fall semester. We do not admit students into the Ph.D. program in the Spring or Summer semesters.

Review Process

All completed and verified SOPHAS applications are first reviewed by the Admissions Committees of the major to which an applicant has applied (EPID, OEHS, or SBHS). Candidates that are recommended for admission at this level, are put forth to the SPH Doctoral Admissions Committee, which makes the final decisions on admissions and funding.

Advanced Standing for Applicants with an Approved Master's Degree

Students who enter the Ph.D. program with an MPH or approved Master's degree are eligible for Advanced Standing. This allows students to complete an abbreviated course of study that takes between 2 and 3 years to complete, depending on the student's past course work and current interests.

MPH Major Code: 8408
PhD Major Code: 8409

Social and Behavioral Sciences, M.P.H.

For specific information on this program, please use the link to the right.

• Social and Behavioral Sciences, M.P.H

Social and Behavioral Sciences, Ph.D.

For specific information on this program, please use the link to the right.

• Social and Behavioral Sciences, Ph.D.

COURSES

SBHS 601. Social and Behavioral Theory. 3 Hours.
The focus of this course is on the role of individual behavior in attaining health. Integration of the concepts of health education and behavioral science to facilitate changes in health behavior is addressed.

SBHS 610. Public Health Research Methods. 3 Hours.
Provide students with the practical skills necessary to read, understand, critique, and contribute to the public health literature. Emphasis is placed on common research methods used in public health research.

SBHS 611. Community Assessment. 3 Hours.
Provides students with the knowledge and skills needed to conduct meaningful community needs assessments to improve a community’s health. The course will cover various community health topics including the nature of health and its varied social determinants, the use of quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection methods, and data analysis.

SBHS 613. Public Health Program Evaluation. 3 Hours.
Examines and builds competence in the evaluation of public health programs, policies, and environment/systems change efforts to advise programmatic and funding decisions. Includes emphasis on practical application of processes and practices from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (JCSEE), and the American Evaluation Association (AEA).

SBHS 615. Intervention Design. 3 Hours.
Focuses on the utility of social and behavioral science theories as tools to confront public health problems, understand the behavior change process, and develop and implement interventions to address these problems at the intrapersonal, interpersonal, organizational, and community levels. Students create an intervention program plan informed by theory as a skills application experience.
SBHS 616. Introduction to Public Health Interventions for Social and Behavioral Scientist. 4 Hours.
Introduction to the process of planning, developing, implementing and evaluating an effective public health intervention. Students learn tools and strategies commonly associated with excellence in the discipline in order to meet an important health need or concern relevant for a local community group.

SBHS 617. Community Engagement and Advocacy in Public Health. 2 Hours.
Addresses the roles of community engagement and advocacy as essential tools to mobilize organizational and social change. Through lecture, discussion, case studies, self-assessment, and experiential exercises, students develop the knowledge and skills necessary to engage and empower communities through participation and advocacy.

SBHS 619. Intervention Planning & Design. 3 Hours.
PR: SBHS 611 and SBHS 616. This course focuses on the utility of social and behavioral science theories as tools to confront public health problems, understand the behavior change process, and how to develop and implement interventions to address these problems at the intrapersonal, interpersonal, organizational, and community levels. Students create an intervention program plan informed by theory as a skills application experience.

SBHS 620. Implementing and Managing Public Health Programs. 3 Hours.
This course provides students with conceptual and practical tools used for implementing and managing health promotion programs. Critical elements include learning to implement theoretically sound intervention programs with high levels of program fidelity; effectively engaging and managing human, financial, and community resources; and identifying and responding to commonly occurring opportunities and challenges. Course methods emphasize cooperative and experiential learning.

SBHS 629. Capstone Course. 2 Hours.
This is the culminating experience for social and behavioral sciences majors in the MPH program and requires students to demonstrate their capacity to synthesize and integrate the core and SBHS departmental competencies via a paper and poster.

SBHS 630. Foundations of Wellness. 3 Hours.
Wellness is examined as a component of health promotion. A wellness lifestyle is fundamental to promoting a holistic wellness concept. Quality-of-life issues and programs are explored for a variety of audiences.

SBHS 660. Survey Research Methods. 3 Hours.
This course presents scientific knowledge and practical skills used in survey research. Focus is on question construction and development, questionnaire design, sampling and surveying modes, interviewing techniques, and survey data analysis.

SBHS 661. Qualitative Research Methods. 3 Hours.
Introduces students to qualitative research methods and study designs. Includes critiques of qualitative study literature, student-driven studies using various types of study designs and how to analyze and report the results of qualitative studies. (Also listed as SBHS 761 - students may not count both this course and 761 toward degree requirements.).

SBHS 663. Advanced Evaluation in Public Health. 3 Hours.
PR: (BIOS 601 and SBHS 613 and EPID 617) or consent. Advanced topics will include the use of logic models, innovative approaches in evaluation, analyzing and interpreting evaluation data, the role of evaluation in shaping policy, and developmental evaluation. Didactic instruction and experiential learning will be emphasized.

SBHS 664. Public Health Advocacy. 3 Hours.
The course will introduce students to advocacy as an important tool to mobilize social and organizational change through education and community support. The course will train students to develop effective advocacy strategies, present those strategies through written and oral communication, and refine their professional skills. This course requires some amount of travel for course related activities.

SBHS 665. Grant Writing for Public Health Practice. 3 Hours.
PR: SBHS 601 and (SBHS 613 or SBHS 612). This course addresses skills and techniques necessary for writing successful grant proposals for professionals in public health agencies. This is a writing intensive course focused on grant writing and evaluation of social and behavioral based health promotion and disease prevention programs and interventions and is specifically tailored for the public health practice workforce.

SBHS 690. Teaching Practicum. 1-3 Hours.
PR: Consent. Supervised practice in college teaching of social and behavioral sciences. Note: This course is intended to insure that graduate assistants are adequately prepared and supervised when they are given college teaching responsibility. It also provides a mechanism for students not on assistantships to gain teaching experience.

SBHS 691. Advanced Topics. 1-6 Hours.
PR: Consent. Investigation in advanced topics that are not covered in regularly scheduled courses.

SBHS 693A. Special Topics. 1-6 Hours.
A study of contemporary topics selected from recent developments in the field.

SBHS 695. Independent Study. 1-9 Hours.
Faculty-supervised study of topics not available through regular course offerings.

SBHS 696. Graduate Seminar. 1-3 Hours.
PR: Consent. Each graduate student will present at least one seminar to the assembled faculty and graduate student body of his or her program.
SBHS 697. Research. 1-9 Hours.
PR: Consent, Research activities leading to thesis, problem report, research paper or equivalent scholarly project, or a dissertation. Grading will be S/U.

SBHS 698. Thesis or Dissertation. 1-6 Hours.
PR: Consent. This is an optional course for programs that believe that this level of control and supervision is needed during the writing of the students' reports, theses, or dissertations.

SBHS 701. Public Health Grant Writing. 3 Hours.
PR: SBHS 601. This course addresses various components of the grant writing process, including collaboration, funding sources, proposal preparation, and grants management for health professionals. Students will benefit from having a research methods course.

SBHS 711. Research Translation for Health. 3 Hours.
PR: SBHS 610. Principles, theories, and evidence-based methods of knowledge and research translation for health are discussed to facilitate student competence for translating research discoveries into policies and practices that promote health and prevent disease.

SBHS 715. Intervention Design. 3 Hours.
PR: SBHS 601 and SBHS 610. This course will provide students with the conceptual and practical tools used in planning, designing, implementing, and evaluating health promotion programs. Through reading, cooperative learning, and discussing, students will gain experience in these four areas. Students will also apply information learned in foundation courses.

SBHS 760. Survey Research Methods. 3 Hours.
This course presents scientific knowledge and practical skills used in survey research. Focus is on question construction and development, questionnaire design, sampling and survey modes, interviewing techniques, and survey data analysis. (Also listed as SBHS 660. Students may not count both SBHS 760 and SBHS 660 toward degree requirements.)

SBHS 761. Qualitative Research Methods. 3 Hours.
This course will introduce students to qualitative research methods, including the various types of study design. The course will include critiques of qualitative studies in the relevant research literature as well as student-driven studies using various types of study designs. Students will also learn about analyzing and reporting the results of qualitative studies.

SBHS 763. Advanced Evaluation Public Health. 3 Hours.
PR: BIOS 601 and SBHS 613 or consent. Application of scientific public health program evaluation methods. Students will learn about theory and methods of program evaluation, identification of stakeholders, data collection, preparation, analysis, reporting and conclusion.

SBHS 790. Teaching Practicum. 1-3 Hours.
PR: Consent. Supervised practice in college teaching of SBHS. Note: This course is intended to insure that graduate assistants are adequately prepared and supervised when they are given college teaching responsibility. It also provides a mechanism for students not on assistantships to gain teaching experience.

SBHS 795. Independent Study. 1-9 Hours.
PR: Consent. Faculty-supervised study of topics not available through regular course offerings.

SBHS 796. Graduate Seminar. 1-3 Hours.
PR: Consent. Each graduate student will present at least one seminar to the assembled faculty and graduate student body of his or her program.

SBHS 797. Research. 1-9 Hours.
PR: Consent. Research activities leading to thesis, problem report, research paper or equivalent scholarly project, or a dissertation. (Will be graded S/U).