

# Milken Institute School of Public Health

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

## Department of Prevention and Community Health

### Master of Public Health Community Oriented Primary Care (COPC) 2025-2026

Note: All curriculum revisions will be updated immediately  
on the website <http://www.publichealth.gwu.edu/>

#### Program Director

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#### Mission Statement

The Community Oriented Primary Care (COPC) Program at the Milken Institute School of Public Health at George Washington University offers a unique Master of Public Health (MPH) designed to train health professionals and public health practitioners to develop and evaluate interventions to improve community health, clinical care outcomes, and patient experience, while maximizing resources and eliminating health inequities.

**The COPC program trains future health care innovators in the integration of community health and primary care to conceptualize, implement, evaluate, and disseminate interventions that bridge public health and clinical medicine.** COPC begins by teaching practitioners methods to fully understand the needs of communities, health care providers, and policy makers. With this in-depth understanding, COPC practitioners learn to work with stakeholders to prioritize evidence-informed interventions and improve health outcomes and patient experience while maximizing resources and eliminating health disparities. COPC practitioners learn to conduct in-depth assessments which help to shape intervention design, inform evaluation approaches, and design dissemination strategies. Intervention skills are acquired to improve health indicators considering individual, community, social, and structural factors. Evaluation skills are acquired that include the analysis of qualitative, quantitative, and cost data. Dissemination skills are acquired to scale-up evidence-informed health practices and interventions. COPC practitioners will be able to implement, evaluate, and disseminate individual-level behavioral interventions, peer-led interventions, mobile health interventions, capacity building programs, quality improvement projects using data from electronic health records, structural interventions to improve community health outcomes, advocacy campaigns, and health system innovations to improve the ability of community based organizations to educate, test, and link to care people with preventable and chronic health conditions. Through experiential learning, COPC practitioners will develop the skills necessary to lead health improvement projects in community, health department, academic, research, and clinical settings.

#### Goals

The following are goals of this educational program:

- Provide the knowledge and skills to develop and evaluate community-based interventions using the COPC principles and best practices in community health and primary care.
- Support the critical analysis of policies and social determinants of health that impact COPC practice.
- Provide opportunities for COPC practice, especially within historically excluded and marginalized communities.
- Produce health and public health practitioners with skills necessary to excel in the following positions:
  - Clinical Quality Improvement Specialist (Clinic setting)
  - Patient Centered Medical Home Team Leader (Clinic setting)

- Supervisor of Patient Care Coordination (Clinic or Managed care organization setting)
- Community Health Specialist (Community, Clinic, or Public Health setting)
- Health Education Specialist (Academic, Community, Clinic, or Public Health setting)
- Health Promotion Specialist (Community or Clinic Setting)
- Supervisor of Community Health Worker Program (Community or Clinic setting)
- Community Health Research Coordinator (Academic, Clinic, Research, or Community setting)
- Director of a Community Clinic or Community Health Organization (With dual health and MPH degree)

## **Background**

COPC provides the bridge between clinical medicine and public health, in which the community is the focal point in the delivery of health care. It provides a conceptual and methodological framework to rationalize, organize, and adapt available resources for the delivery of health services. The methods are essential to the organized delivery of health care in community-based practices, organizations engaged in managed care, and responsive governmental health systems.

The basic concepts of COPC were initially implemented in South Africa during the early 1940's by Sidney and Emily Kark with the creation of community health centers. These centers promoted a reorientation of health services at the community level through a unique linkage between individual clinical care and public health. They served as a laboratory for teaching and training health professionals.

Since that time, COPC has been taught and practiced in several settings around the world. It has been an important element in the Community Health Center movement, the Indian Health Service, and urban health departments in the United States as well as a variety of public health and primary care systems around the world. Developments in health informatics, community engagement, mobile health, geographic information systems, and qualitative information gathering techniques have proved to be important assets to COPC practice.

## **The Concept of COPC**

The essence of COPC is the planning and delivery of health care to a defined community in response to the defined needs of that community. This practice requires the planned integration of the classical public health roles of health promotion and disease prevention at population levels with the delivery of primary health care, which focuses on the clinical treatment of disease and its sequelae. COPC recognizes that, in line with the World Health Organization definition of health as being far more than the absence of disease, a clinical practice should be responsive to the broad health needs of the community and should be flexible enough to respond to changes in those needs. COPC can be defined as a continuous process by which primary care is provided to a defined community on the basis of its assessed health needs through the planned integration of public health with clinical practice. The COPC program curriculum teaches the following six-step process:

1. Community definition
2. Community characterization
3. Problem prioritization
4. Detailed assessment
5. Intervention
6. Evaluation

The overall curriculum is designed to give the learner the necessary public health tools to apply the principles of COPC in the context of community health practice, and to be well educated in the disciplines of applied public health.

## **Requirements**

There are no program specific pre-requisites for entering the COPC Program, other than a bachelor's or higher degree. This program is appropriate for anyone (clinicians and non-clinicians) with an interest health care innovation and management of community health programs from the grass-roots level to the policy level. This

program seeks individuals especially interested in working with historically excluded and marginalized communities to eliminate health inequities through transdisciplinary teams.

All Milken Institute School of Public Health (SPH) MPH students who select the COPC Program enroll in MPH Core Courses which include 17 Core credits, 18 credits of program-specific courses, and 10 elective credits. The 45-credit hour requirement includes both the Applied Practice Experience (Practicum) (0 credits) and Culminating Experience (2 credits), where students apply their didactic education in real world settings (Practicum) and pursue original research (Culminating Experience). The specific course requirements are presented in the attached Program at a Glance sheet.

### **COPC Program Competencies**

Upon completion of the MPH, COPC Program students should possess the following functional competencies:

1. **Develop characterizations of communities and identify their health needs using the principles of COPC.** Relevant courses: PUBH 6500, 6501, 6504, 6510, 6512, 6513.
2. **Build a community asset map using qualitative and quantitative information about community needs and assets.** Relevant courses: PUBH 6500, 6501, 6504, 6510, 6512, 6513, 6514.
3. **Develop the ability to build partnerships and manage community health organizations by engaging stakeholders to implement community-based programs.** Relevant courses: PUBH 6500, 6501, 6510, 6512, 6513, 6514.
4. **Develop an evaluation plan for a community-based intervention or COPC program.** Relevant courses: PUBH 6501, 6510, 6512, 6513.
5. **Apply COPC processes and principles to address health disparities.** Relevant courses: PUBH 6510, 6512, 6513, 6514.
6. **Provide health policy recommendations aimed at reducing health inequities in the US healthcare system.** Relevant courses: PUBH 6510, 6512, 6513, 6514.

### **Recent Practicum and Culminating Experience Topics**

- Assessing Latino community health needs
- Early childhood literacy – Reach Out and Read
- Hospice care
- Childhood obesity
- Defining homeless communities
- Using geographic information systems to improve access to care
- Community health promoter training in Chiapas, Mexico
- Community-based rehabilitation programs in La Estancia, El Salvador
- Environmental scan of PrEP promotion to young Black Women at a school-based health clinic
- Understanding barriers to care management and meeting clinical standards in the Patient-Centered medical home setting
- Applying a reproductive health equity framework for assessing maternal quality measures
- Integration of biomedical HIV prevention into primary health care for sexual minorities

### **Interprofessional Education (IPE) Experience (PUBH 6023):**

MPH students are required to select an IPE experience from a host of options provided throughout enrollment to participate in a one-time, case-based or activity-based learning experience. The IPE experience is a way to actively participate in a supervised environment to work with people from other professions/programs outside of public health. Students are eligible to enroll in the IPE upon successful completion of most of the MPH core coursework including: PUBH 6002, 6003, 6007, 6011, 6012 and 6021. Students will have many opportunities to register for this zero-credit (no fee) IPE course

(PUBH 6023 Interprofessional Education Experience) and will receive credit upon successful completion. More information is available [here](#).

**Applied Practice Experience (Practicum & EPR) (PUBH 6000):**

The Applied Practice Experience (APEX) may be satisfied with either a practicum or, for experienced public health professionals, through an expedited portfolio review (EPR).

The practicum is a planned, supervised, and evaluated practice experience that aims to provide students with an opportunity to synthesize, integrate, and apply practical skills, knowledge, and training learned through courses, gain applied experience in a professional public health work environment, and work on public health practice projects that are of particular interest to you. Information about the Practicum will be introduced through school-wide Practicum Information Sessions held by the Office of Applied Public Health and through meetings with your department practicum staff and faculty.

During the practicum, you will work at least 120 hours in the field under the supervision of the site preceptor who has agreed to directly supervise the work you are conducting. Students are required to fulfill all requirements of the 120-hour practicum to receive credit for PUBH 6000.

If you have had prior work experience, then you will find that the practicum provides the opportunity to hone skills or to gain new experience in a different area. However, if you have substantial public health experience relevant to your department/track, including 5+ years of full-time public health work after receiving your undergraduate degree, or 3+ years of full-time work for students who already have a graduate degree prior to beginning the MPH, then you may be able to satisfy the APEX requirement through an EPR instead of doing the practicum, with advanced approval by your department's practicum team.

**Please see the curriculum sheets that follow.**

<div>Milken Institute School of Public Health</div> <div>THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY</div>		<div>Master of Public Health Community Oriented Primary Care Program 2025-2026</div> <div>Program-at-a-Glance</div>	
Semester Offered = on-campus courses, unless otherwise specified; COPC students may take up to 15 credits online			
Required Core Courses (17 credits)		Credits	Semester Offered
PUBH 6000	MPH Applied Practice Experience	0	Fall, Spring, Summer
PUBH 6002*	Biostatistical Applications for Public Health	3	Fall, Spring, Summer 10 wk
PUBH 6003*	Principles and Practice of Epidemiology	3	Fall, Spring, Summer 10 wk
PUBH 6007*	Social and Behavioral Approaches to Public Health	2	Fall, Spring, Summer
PUBH 6011*	Environmental & Biological Foundations of Public Health (Non-PA/MD/OD students)	3	Fall, Spring, Summer
PUBH 6012*	Fundamentals of Health Policy: Public Health and Healthcare	2	Fall, Spring, Summer 10 wk
PUBH 6021*	Essentials of Public Health Leadership & Practice 1: Leading Self and Teams in Public Health	1	Fall, Spring, Summer
PUBH 6022*	Essentials of Public Health Leadership & Practice 2: Managing Organizations and Influencing Systems in Public Health*	1	Fall, Spring, Summer
PUBH 6023	Interprofessional Education Experience	0	Fall, Spring, Summer
PUBH 6015.11	COPC Culminating Experience	2	See Advisor
Required Program-Specific Courses (18 credits)			
PUBH 6500*	Planning and Implementation of Health Promotion Programs	3	Fall, Spring
PUBH 6501	Program Evaluation	3	Fall, Spring
PUBH 6504	Social & Behavioral Science Research Methods	3	Fall, Spring
PUBH 6510	Community-Oriented Primary Care (COPC) Principles and Practice	3	Fall (first year)
PUBH 6512	Community Oriented Primary Care Policy and Issues	2	Spring
PUBH 6513	Community Health Leadership and Management	2	Spring
PUBH 6514*	Preventing Health Disparities	2	Fall, Spring
Elective Credits (10 credits) – Any PUBH Graduate Course(s) Recommended Electives Listed Below:			
PUBH 6516	Community Health Information Resources	2	Spring
PUBH 6503*	Introduction to Public Health Communication and Marketing	3	Fall, Summer
PUBH 6534	Community-Based Participatory Research	2	Spring
PUBH 6531	Health Promotion in Health Care Settings	2	Spring
PUBH 6262	Introduction to Geographic Information Systems	1	Fall, Spring, Summer
PUBH 6530	Qualitative Methods in Health Promotion	2	Spring
PUBH 26416	Ethical and Cultural Issues in Global Health Research and Programs	1	Fall, Spring
PUBH 6853	Use of Statistical Packages: Data Management and Data Analysis	3	Fall, Spring
HSML 6204	Quality and Performance Improvement	2	Spring
Course Distribution		Credits	
MPH Core Courses		17	
Program-Specific Courses		18	
Electives		10	
Total Degree Credits		45	

\*Courses offered on campus (residential) and online; COPC students may take up to 15 credits online

Course Descriptions and Registration information can be found on the website: <http://publichealth.gwu.edu/academics/>.

1. **Graduate Credit Requirement:** 45 graduate credits are required.
2. **Course Requirements:** Successful completion of the Core Courses and the Program-Specific Courses are required.
3. **Practicum Requirement:** Students are required to fulfill all requirements of the Applied Practice Experience (APEX, Practicum).
4. **Interprofessional Education Experience (IPE):** Students are required to enroll and participate in an authorized IPE activity (PUBH 6023).
5. **Grade Point Requirement:** A 3.0 (B average) program grade point average (GPA) is required.
6. **Time Limit Requirement:** The degree must be completed within five years.
7. **Transfer Credit Policy:** Up to 12 graduate credits that have not been applied to a previous graduate degree may be transferred to the MPH upon approval. Credits must have been earned from an accredited institution in the last 3 years with a grade point of 3.0 or better.
8. **CITI Training Requirement:** All students are required to complete training regarding human subject protection regulation and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA). To fulfill this requirement, you must complete the Collaborative IRB Training Initiative (CITI) Course in The Protection of Human Research Subjects.
9. **Integrity Quiz & Plagiarism Requirement:** All students are required to review the George Washington University Code of Academic Integrity and take the quiz within their first semester of study. The Code of Integrity and step-by-step instructions can be found here: <http://publichealth.gwu.edu/integrity>.
10. **Professional Enhancement Requirement:** Students must participate in 8 hours per degree program of advisor pre-approved Public Health-related lectures, seminars, and symposia, related to your field of study. Professional Enhancement activities supplement the academic curriculum and help prepare students to participate actively in the professional community. Opportunities for professional enhancement are regularly publicized via the Milken Institute SPH Listserv and through your department or advisor. Students must submit documentation of Professional Enhancement activities to the Office of Student Records. The documentation consists of the Professional Enhancement Form <http://publichealth.gwu.edu/academics/forms> (which includes a prior approval signature from the student's advisor, a description of the program agenda, and proof of attendance). Remember to submit your documentation before you apply to graduate.
11. **Online Courses for COPC Students:** COPC students are residential students. As such, they may take up to 15 credits from online course offerings during their program. Please plan accordingly so you do not exceed this 15 credit limit. Note, online courses are offered through the **2GW platform** (<https://2gw.publichealthonline.gwu.edu/login>) and have different start and end semester dates from residential/on campus courses.

**NOTE: Always see your advisor for course scheduling and sequencing strategies, but remember that proper course selection, fulfilling requirements, and on-time graduation are your responsibilities.**

The Master of Public Health (MPH) curriculum consists of four types of courses:

- Required MPH Core Courses
- Required Program-Specific Courses
- Elective credits
- Required Applied Practice Experience and Culminating Experience

The MPH core courses are designed to provide students with a broad public health context as well as a critical foundation for subsequent coursework. Early completion of these core courses ensures that students will have the base of knowledge to successfully complete the program specific courses and to get as much as possible out of them. As such, entering students are expected to enroll in MPH core courses in accordance with the following guidelines:

- We expect MPH students to complete the MPH core courses in their first year of graduate study (fall/spring/summer) if they are on a schedule to complete their studies in two years.
- Students may take core courses in any order.

Part-time students (who generally take 5 to 7 credits per semester) will typically concentrate on taking just core courses in their first year, and then take program-specific courses in their second and third years.

In order to help assure that all students can complete core courses in the first year of study, Milken Institute SPH will offer all core courses during all three semesters (fall, spring, and summer). This will allow students who wish to complete their MPH degree within two years to do so, and will allow every student to make steady progress toward completing the MPH degree.

We recognize that there may be exceptional circumstances that make it difficult for a student to complete core courses in the first year as outlined above. Any such student should discuss this situation with their academic advisor.

For additional information and resources regarding registration, course descriptions, schedule of classes, etc. follow this link: <http://publichealth.gwu.edu/academics>.