

Milken Institute School of Public Health

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

Department of Prevention and Community Health

Master of Public Health Health Communication and Digital Media 2027-2028

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

Program Director

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Mission

The mission of the Master of Public Health in Health Communication and Digital Media program is to prepare public health professionals to design, implement, and evaluate effective communication strategies that improve population health. Grounded in theory, evidence, and innovative practice, the program equips students to leverage artificial intelligence (AI), digital media, and harness emerging technologies alongside community-engaged approaches to promote health, address misinformation, enhance digital health literacy, and address complex public health challenges.

Goal

Our graduates will possess the skills necessary to become highly effective public health communication practitioners and leaders. Their specific expertise in the application of communication strategies and digital tools will enable them to work collaboratively with a broad range of professionals across disciplines to deliver high-impact, population-level health communication campaigns and initiatives.

Specifically, our students will become proficient at developing, implementing and evaluating:

- Communication programs that help people make sound health decisions and effectively manage their health behaviors.
- AI, digital media and their application to health behavior change through population-level campaigns and initiatives.
- Effective messages and strategies using digital media to promote evidence-based information, combat misinformation, and build digital health literacy.
- Social marketing programs that improve the health of communities by enhancing the competitiveness of healthful (versus unhealthful) products and services offered to community members.

Course Requirements

All Milken Institute School of Public Health at George Washington University (Milken Institute SPH) MPH students who select the Health Communication and Digital Media (HCDM) Program enroll in Milken Institute SPH-wide core courses (17 credits) include the practicum and culminating experience, departmental core courses (6 credits), HCDM required courses (13 credits), and HCDM-specific electives (9 credits). In this 45-credit program, 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.

Program-Specific Competencies

Upon completion of the MPH Program in Health Communication and Digital Media, students will be able to:

1. Apply an ecological framework to assess and promote population health.

Students will be able to identify and assess population-based and place-based causes of health and disease. They will also be able to apply this information to develop strategic health improvement plans, and to recommend and develop effective public health interventions. This includes, but is not limited to, the ability to understand and explain the potential and limitations of public health communication efforts. Relevant courses: PUBH 6503, 6570, 6579.

2. Utilize communication research to develop and improve public health programs.

Students will understand and be able to explain the value of health communication research methods in creating and improving public health programs. They will be grounded in public health research and evaluation methodologies and apply them in HCDM. Moreover, students will be able to apply a range of qualitative and quantitative research techniques in creating, monitoring and continuously improving HCDM and other digital health initiatives. Relevant courses: PUBH 6503, 6501, 6570, 6500, 6579.

3. Develop and implement health communication strategies that leverage digital media and harness emerging technologies alongside community-engaged approaches to promote individual- and population-level behavior change.

Students will understand the relevance of—and be able to apply—a range of communication, cognitive and behavioral science theories in the effective design and delivery of health communication messages and strategies. This includes the ability to use formative research to design effective health messages, incorporate digital media, and the ability to plan and implement effective means of delivering health information to targeted populations and combating misinformation. Relevant courses: PUBH 6503, 6570, 6578, 6579.

4. Develop and administer health communication campaigns to promote individual- and population-level behavior change and improve the health capacity of communities.

Students will be able to plan and implement health communication campaigns prioritizing consumers (i.e., the people most affected by the burden of the public health problem). They will also be able to plan and implement communication programs that create environmental

change by targeting the people who make decisions about products and services offered, and policies implemented, in various community settings. This includes developing effective digital media for public health products and services, and integrated marketing communication campaigns to support them. Relevant courses: PUBH 6500, 6503, 6570, 6578.

5. Develop and administer health communication programs to promote the adoption of policies that enhance digital health literacy, and address complex public health challenges.

Students will understand the relevance of—and be able to apply— a range of theories and techniques to advocate for policies that advance the public's health. This includes the ability to harness digital media and technology to effectively design messages for use in policy advocacy campaigns, and to plan and implement effective means of delivering policy advocacy campaigns. Relevant courses: PUBH 6503, 6570, 6573, 6578, 6579.

6. Evaluate health communication and social marketing initiatives.

Students will be able to prepare program goals and objectives for health enhancement programs. They will also be able to conduct basic evaluations of health communication and social marketing programs, including working with stakeholders to plan and implement process and outcome evaluations of health communication and social marketing initiatives. Relevant courses: PUBH 6503, 6570, 6501, 6504.

Please see the curriculum sheets that follow.

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Master of Public Health Health Communication & Digital Media

Program-at-a-Glance

2027-2028

*Semester Offered = on-campus courses, unless otherwise specified; * = courses offered on campus and online; residential students may take as many as 15 credits from online offerings);*

^Only one of these courses may count toward your elective credits.

Required Core Course (17 credits)		Credits	Semester Offered
PUBH 6000	MPH Applied Practice Experience (no fee is charged)	0	Fall, Spring, Summer
PUBH 6002*	Biostatistical Applications for Public Health	3	Fall, Spring, Summer
PUBH 6003*	Principles & Practice of Epidemiology	3	Fall, Spring, Summer
PUBH 6007*	Social & Behavioral Approaches to Public Health	2	Fall, Spring, Summer
PUBH 6011*	Principles of Environmental Health Sciences	3	Fall, Spring, Summer
PUBH 6012*	Fundamentals of Health Policy	2	Fall, Spring, Summer
PUBH 6021*	Essentials of Public Health Practice & Leadership 1	1	Fall, Spring, Summer
PUBH 6022*	Essentials of Public Health Practice & Leadership 2	1	Fall, Spring, Summer
PUBH 6023	Interprofessional Education Experience	0	Fall, Spring, Summer
PUBH 6015.19	HCDM Culminating Experience	2	See Advisor
Required Departmental Courses (6 credits)		Credits	Semester Offered
PUBH 6500*	Planning & Implementing Health Promotion Programs	3	Fall, Spring
PUBH 6501	Program Evaluation	3	Fall, Spring
Required Program-Specific Courses (13 credits)		Credits	Semester Offered
PUBH 6503*	Public Health Communication Campaigns in Domestic & Global Settings	3	Fall, Spring, Summer
PUBH 6504	Social & Behavioral Science Research Methods	3	Fall, Spring
PUBH 6570	Advanced Public Health Communication: Theory & Practice	3	Spring (every other year)
PUBH 6578	Generative AI Applications in Health Promotion	2	Spring
PUBH 6579	Health Misinformation in Digital Ecosystems	2	Fall
Program-Specific Electives (9 credits)		Credits	Semester Offered
<i>Select from list below or select other SPH or other school courses (e.g., MKTG, PPPA, SMPA, etc.) with advance approval from advisor. Note: Prerequisites may apply. Plan accordingly.</i>			
Digital Health, Communication, and Media Electives			
PUBH 6571*	Social Marketing: Theory & Practice	3	Summer
SMPA 6202	Media Effects, Public Opinion, & Persuasion	3	Fall
COMM 6150	Persuasion	3	Fall

MKTG 6290.11	Social Media & Influencer Marketing	3	Fall
SMPA 6270.80	Science Communication	3	Fall
MKTG 6252	Digital Marketing in the Age of AI	3	Fall
INFR 6101*	Principles of Medical Informatics	3	
Global Health Electives			
PUBH 6058*	Researching Violence Against Women & Girls	2	Fall, Spring
PUBH 6132*	Water, Sanitation, & Hygiene (WASH) in Low-Income Countries	2	
PUBH 6400*	Global Health Frameworks	2	Fall, Spring
PUBH 6452*	Social & Behavior Change Communication in Middle-to-Low- Income Countries	2	Summer
PUBH 6563*	Global Child Health	2	Fall, Spring
Policy Related Electives			
PUBH 6054*	Community Engagement & Advocacy	2	
PUBH 6315	Introduction to Health Policy Analysis	2	Fall, Spring, Summer
PUBH 6335*	Public Health & Law	3	Fall, Spring
PUBH 6390*	Prescription Drugs: Policy & Public Health	3	
Methods Related Electives			
PUBH 6853	Use of SAS for Data Management & Analysis	3	Fall, Spring
PUBH 6262	Introduction to Geographic Information Systems	1	Fall, Spring
PUBH 6530*	Qualitative Methods in Health Promotion	2	Spring
PUBH 6572*	Marketing Research for Public Health	3	Spring
Additional Electives			
<i>Other electives with approval from your advisor</i>			
With the approval of an academic adviser, HCDM students can take courses from any graduate-level program (6000 or above) within the Milken Institute School of Public Health for which they have met the prerequisites. Additionally, HCDM students can take courses offered by other schools and departments in our university. There are courses offered by Marketing/Business (MKTG), the School of Media and Public Affairs (SMPA), and Communication (COMM), for example, that are relevant for HCDM students. <u>Check the university's schedule of classes each semester</u> for options, click on "Main Campus," and see what's being offered. One caveat: any elective course must be at the 6000 (graduate) level or higher to count as an elective for our students.			
Course Distribution		Credits	
Public Health Core Courses		17	
Required Departmental Courses		6	
Required Program-Specific Courses		13	
Program-Specific Electives		9	
Total Degree Credits		45	

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

Graduation Requirements

All students accepted to this MPH program must follow the policies and regulations outlined in

the [GW Bulletin](#) and the [GWSPH Student Handbook](#). This includes, but is not limited to:

1. Minimum Grade Point Average (GPA)
2. Minimum Course Grades
3. Continuous Enrollment
4. Maximum Time to Degree
5. Required Minimum Degree Credits
6. Transfer Credit Policy
7. CITI Training
8. Integrity Quiz and Plagiarism
9. Professional Enhancement (PE) Hours
10. Interprofessional Education (IPE) Experience
11. Applied Practice Experience (Practicum)
12. Culminating Experience (e.g., CE)

Advising notes

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

- Required MPH Core Courses
- Required Departmental and Program-Specific Courses
- Elective credits
- Required Applied Practice Experience (Practicum) 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, except where prerequisites apply.

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 his or her academic advisor.

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