



**Working for  
a better future**  
*Careers in Public Health*



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## **Background**

This booklet was developed as part of the Public Health Workforce Development Plan, an initiative to build New Zealand's future capabilities in public health. It provides information on training and career pathways for those interested in entering this exciting and developing field.

## **Acknowledgements**

Special thanks go to the individuals and organisations who agreed to have their work profiled in this booklet. Their generous contributions of time and expertise are greatly appreciated.

This booklet is mainly about careers in public health services. However, it is very important to recognise that everyone who works in health – doctors, nurses and other health professionals – has a role in achieving public health goals and may wish to access the training outlined in this booklet.





## What is public health?

Public health is work to improve the health of communities and populations (or sections of the community) and reduce inequalities in health status. The focus of work activity may be in the social and physical environments in which we live, as well as on programmes to develop more healthy activities.

### KEY WAYS PUBLIC HEALTH WORKERS ACHIEVE RESULTS ARE BY:

- building healthy public policies
- creating supportive environments
- strengthening community action
- developing personal skills
- reorienting services towards health gain.

This approach is from the Ottawa Charter, a global framework used in New Zealand for planning public health strategies. The framework recognises that to improve the health of populations and individuals, there is a need to look wider than just providing health services and address the determinants of health.

For instance, if people are to take responsibility for the health of their families and themselves, they need:

- protection from environmental factors that could lead to health risks
- adequate housing
- a liveable income
- employment
- educational opportunities
- a sense of belonging and being valued
- a sense of control over life circumstances.

The focus can also be on population health programmes delivered to individuals. Examples might be immunisation to keep groups of people healthy, screening people to identify early stage disease to enable more effective treatment, and smoking cessation programmes.

It is an exciting field where making a difference is not just a vision but a planned long-term process of action.

## Are you up to the challenge of a dynamic public health career?

A wide range of knowledge and skills is required in public health. As well, people with commitment to and passion for improving the health of communities and individuals within these communities are needed. Team work and a value and respect for all people are key qualities.

## What are some of the public health careers?

In the next pages we outline the role of a

- **Health Promoter**
- **Health Protection Officer**
- **Public Health Nurse**
- **Public Health Dietitian/ Nutritionist**
- **Community Health Worker**
- **Programme Co-ordinator**
- **Public Health Physician**
- **Policy Analyst**

But there are many other key people who make up the public health workforce.

Some of these are:

**Epidemiologists:** who study diseases in populations and assist in assessing health needs.

**Researchers:** who research and evaluate social factors involved in health and safety.

**Public health managers:** who scope the work and manage public health teams.

**Programme managers:** who manage large programmes of work on key issues, eg, cardiovascular health, mental health, road safety, etc.

**People with generic skills:** eg, contract management, service planning, and systems management and administration.

Together all these people plan, implement programmes and monitor change in priority areas of health and safety.

## What qualifications are needed?

Most public health positions require some form of tertiary study. This may be a non-degree tertiary programme, (such as a foundation certificate course); a university degree, or a post-graduate degree. Requirements will vary according to the career you choose. Increasingly, some form of tertiary study in public health will be required. Key public health qualifications are included on page 20.

## How do you get started?

- Check out the careers outlined in this booklet.
- Check out websites including [www.careers.govt.nz](http://www.careers.govt.nz)
- Talk to careers advisors in schools, polytechs and universities.
- Talk to/visit someone working in the role that interests you. Ring your local District Health Board and ask for the public health unit.

Take action for a dynamic career designed to make a real difference to the health and wellbeing of our communities.





# Health Promoter

## Health promoters plan, implement and evaluate activities that promote health and wellbeing in communities.

Health promotion is about having better health and more control over wellbeing.

Most health promoters work on one or two key issues (such as nutrition, tobacco control, violence prevention or many others) or they may work in settings such as schools or marae with a focus on a group, such as children. They seek evidence-based strategies to achieve change. Health promoters need a wide range of skills and usually continue to train in specific areas as the particular needs of their role dictate.

### ACTIVITIES HEALTH PROMOTERS MIGHT UNDERTAKE:

- build a coalition of people to work on child obesity
- prepare advice to a territorial local authority on the blood alcohol limit for drivers
- develop a mental health programme for youth
- run a campaign on sun safety
- work with a primary healthcare organisation to plan and deliver health promotion/public health programmes.



### What qualifications will you need?

Currently, most positions require either a specific health promotion qualification or a tertiary qualification in a related area such as the social sciences. In the future more employers will be requiring a tertiary qualification specific to either health promotion or public health.

### Who employs health promoters?

Health promoters work in a wide range of organisations such as public health units, iwi and other Māori providers. Other non-government organisations, eg, the Heart Foundation, Cancer Society, Mental Health Foundation. Primary Health Organisations (PHOs), and local and regional government also employ health promoters.

In public health work, learning is a lifelong affair, and new skill development is part of the ongoing work.

### What school subjects do you need?

Health promoters carry out a wide range of roles. All roles require good communication and people skills and on-going learning.

## CAREER 1:

## HEALTH PROMOTER CASSIUS, Hutt Valley Health

CASSIUS KURESA IS A NEW ZEALAND BORN SAMOAN WITH A PASSION FOR PACIFIC HEALTH. He has three main roles as a health promoter at the regional public health unit. He co-ordinates Pacific sexual health promotion, co-ordinates Pacific child and youth health promotion and facilitates and leads the Pacific caucus within the organisation. The Pacific caucus is a group of 13 Pacific staff working in health promotion, health protection and school health at the public health unit. These staff provide advice to their colleagues about effective programmes for promoting health to Pacific peoples in the Wellington/Wairarapa region.

Cassius has a certificate in sexual health promotion and has completed the certificate in health promotion offered at the Health Promotion Forum. He is currently studying towards a Bachelor of Health Science at Massey University. He chose this course because of the broad range of topics covered in the degree.

He loves his work as a health promoter which involves him in health education, advocacy, policy development and community development.

Cassius's understanding of Pacific values and beliefs is a real asset in his work with Pacific people. He works closely with other agencies to advocate and promote Pacific health. One such collaborative event is the annual Creek Fest, a community driven initiative to promote health and culture. The event has gone from strength to strength since it began three years ago and to ensure its success Cassius has encouraged the involvement of DHBs, Porirua HealthLinks, WINZ, Housing NZ, community providers, Porirua City Council, PHOs and the Cancer Society. He says the ability to build trust and rapport with others is an important part of his job enabling him to facilitate, support and lead local initiatives that promote health in the community.

Cassius had worked in a variety of jobs before discovering his passion for health. While working in a car factory he attended a leadership course where he realised that many more opportunities existed to use his potential. He enrolled in a Pacific sexual health course where he met a number of interesting and encouraging people and decided to follow his heart into a career in public health.

His advice to young people wanting to choose a career in health promotion is to contact their local public health unit and ask if it's possible to come in and have a look at the roles available and possibly get some work experience. Cassius would like to see more young people in year 13 contacting public health units and asking for advice. He is excited about the many opportunities for enthusiastic, motivated young people in public health and is working with youth career advisers to try and raise awareness of the opportunities so that school leavers and others can consider an exciting health career.



**“I am such a strong advocate for professional development. I always support my staff to do health promotion courses because I know what a big difference they can make. I am also really supportive of them doing courses that include Pacific models of health because I really want to help our peoples' health improve in ways that are appropriate for them.”**



# Health protection officers (HPOs) plan & implement activities that protect health and wellbeing in communities.

They investigate public health concerns, provide advice and information to community leaders and the public as part of a public health enforcement team. They carry out a regulatory role on behalf of the Director-General of Health.

Areas of focus are environmental health and communicable diseases. In environmental health HPOs identify threats, quantify these and along with others, minimise them. Areas include bio-security and quarantine, drinking water quality, hazardous substances, resource management issues, amongst many others.

Health protection officers undertake surveillance and investigation of communicable disease. They prevent diseases spreading in food and water and enforce effective waste disposal.

Health protection officers contribute to the management of sustainable environments.

## ACTIVITIES HEALTH PROTECTION OFFICERS MIGHT UNDERTAKE:

- the surveillance and eradication of exotic mosquitoes around sea and airports
- check homes and advise families on taking action for lead poisoning
- follow up a case of infectious disease to prevent it from spreading
- investigate a chemical spill and provide advice to protect the public.

# Health Protection Officer



## What school subjects do you need?

Chemistry and biology lay a sound foundation for health protection work.

## What qualifications will you need?

To be a designated HPO in a public health unit, you need academic, practical and personal competencies that have been identified by the Director-General of Health.

Academic competencies will be achieved by anyone completing a Bachelor of Applied Science (health protection major) from Auckland University of Technology, or a Bachelor of Applied Science (environmental health major) from Massey University.

However if you already have a Bachelor of Science you could complete the Graduate Diploma in Environmental Health (Massey University) or other public health qualifications.

Contact your local public health unit (PHU) for advice about your particular requirements.

## Who employs health protection officers?

Health protection officers are part of public health teams in the District Health Board. Many take on a specialist role such as biosecurity, drinking water, or smokefree, while retaining some general tasks. They work closely with other colleagues in public health medicine and health promotion.

Other roles, related to HPOs, include technical officers in public health units and environmental health officers in territorial local authorities.

In the future, a wider range of organisations may seek the sort of skills which health protection officers bring to public health and the professional scope of this work may grow.

## CAREER 2:

# HEALTH PROTECTION OFFICER

## KIRSTEN, Nelson Marlborough Public Health Service

KIRSTEN TODD IS A TRAINEE HEALTH PROTECTION OFFICER BASED IN BLENHEIM WHERE SHE WORKS AND TRAINS WITH TWO EXPERIENCED HEALTH PROTECTION OFFICERS. SHE IS WORKING MAINLY IN A REGIONAL COMMERCIAL SHELLFISH PROGRAMME, ENSURING THAT WATER QUALITY AND HYGIENE CONDITIONS ARE GOOD ENOUGH TO ENSURE THE SHELLFISH IS SAFE TO EAT.

Her other work focuses on interviewing people who have caught notifiable diseases such as campylobacter and salmonella to try and identify where they may have caught them from, and to take any further action required such as inspecting premises like restaurants and cafes. She is also part of a saltmarsh mosquito eradication project and a programme to prevent the accidental importation of exotic mosquitoes at the port.

Kirsten has a Bachelor of Science and, with the support of her employer, is studying towards a Graduate Diploma in Environmental Health. Kirsten's training will enable her to become designated as a health protection officer by the Director-General of Health.

As a lab technician testing marine phytoplankton samples in Nelson she was attracted to the varied and interesting roles of the health protection officers she was working with. So, when the Nelson Marlborough Public Health Service offered her a position as a trainee health protection officer, Kirsten took the opportunity.

She says a big part of her job is educating and informing people about food preparation and hygiene and says it's really empowering to positively influence change in the community. Her work with the shellfish programme involves her in the ongoing monitoring and reporting process for shellfish farms, and water sampling to ensure the quality of existing shellfish operations.

Kirsten says the work of a health protection officer is interesting and varied. She recommends contacting your local council or public health unit and trying to get holiday work experience. She says training on the job has really helped her in her study as it gave her practical experience to draw on.



*“Every time the phone rings I can never be quite sure what I’ll be required to deal with and this means I am constantly learning. It can be frustrating but I thrive on the variety and challenge of not being in a routine role”*



# Public health nurses (PHNs) are registered nurses, and use their nursing expertise alongside their wider knowledge of communities, to promote health and wellbeing.

Health assessments and disease prevention activities are also part of the role. PHNs often become highly respected community people through their work with families/whānau, schools, marae, churches and other networks of people.

Some public health nurses specialise in particular issues such as refugee health, housing issues, child protection and communicable disease control. Most have a very broad role and are involved in a great variety of work.

Public health nurses play a key co-ordination role between families/whānau, communities, and the health and wellbeing sector. They are also one of the first people to gauge any major social trends in the community as they see these trends impacting on their clients.

# Public Health Nurse



## ACTIVITIES PUBLIC HEALTH NURSES MIGHT UNDERTAKE:

- work with teachers to promote health programmes in schools
- work with others to develop a one-stop-shop health service for youth
- play a major part in implementing an immunisation programme
- advocate for healthy home environments with families/whānau and communities
- work with a Primary Healthcare Organisation (PHO).

## What school subjects do you need?

English and science subjects such as biology, chemistry or physics are important.

## What qualifications will you need?

A three year Bachelor of Nursing degree is the basic requirement followed by a current practicing certificate, which needs to be renewed each year. Many public health nurses undertake further qualifications such as a postgraduate course in public health.

## Who employs public health nurses?

Almost all public health nurses are employed by District Health Boards. Some work in public health units, and others in departments such as Child Health, or Family Health. Most PHNs are very mobile, moving around their community every day, touching base with a wide number of organisations and people. They are key players in ensuring the health and wellbeing of communities.

## CAREER 3:

## PUBLIC HEALTH NURSE COREY, Northland Health

COREY PIA'S (NGATI HINE) PUBLIC HEALTH NURSING HAS A YOUTH FOCUS WITH MOST OF his work being with children ranging from pre-schoolers to 18-year olds. He is based at The Pulse – a one stop youth health centre where he has access to a number of participating agencies including Child, Youth and Family Service, community health workers, a school for pregnant mums, a GP clinic and a community constable.

Programmes he is involved with include child immunisations (within a school-based programme), dental hygiene in kohanga reo and kindergartens, sexual health education for high school students, monthly injections for those with rheumatic fever, vision and hearing testing, well child checks and his weekly health clinics at Whangarei Boys High School.

Corey loves working in the community and says it's incredibly rewarding watching kids develop from primary school children into wonderful young adults.

He feels that as a male Māori public health nurse he is able to make a particular difference through his work at the high school where he can mentor boys and provide neutral, caring advice – especially around sexual health issues. He says he helps them grow up and face responsibility without them feeling overwhelmed by the situations they find themselves in. He is currently piloting a chlamydia screening programme.

Corey works a lot with other stakeholders including local iwi health providers, the Asthma Society, the Cancer Society and PHOs. His dental hygiene education in local kohanga has been well supported by a manufacturer who supplied free toothbrushes and toothpaste for the education sessions – some of which are delivered in Te Reo. He says being bilingual is a real asset for his work with Māori schools.

Corey has a Bachelor of Applied Science and a Diploma in Nursing. He was working at Bay of Islands hospital when a friend encouraged him to follow a public health nursing career and Corey says he's never looked back.

He thinks key personal attributes for his role are flexibility, acceptance and understanding. He says people are not always reliable and you can't be judgemental. There are times when you have to be tough but mostly you have to build trusting relationships so that people know they can rely on you.

He has a particular interest in communicable diseases, especially tuberculosis treatment and prevention and will be doing further study to make this a specialist area of practice.



“It's important to keep up-to-date with training – that's what I really like. We are encouraged to do that all the time. I've just finished BCG training (for TB). I'm really committed to making a difference with TB in the North”



# Public health dietitians and public health nutritionists work with groups and communities of people, rather than individuals.

Dietitians and nutritionists support people in choosing food to maintain good health and they work with groups, and the community.

They work with public health and other health professionals to ensure that attractive healthy choices are available. This can involve them in everything from working with the media to developing large nutrition/exercise programmes for adults and children.

A key role is to ensure that the public receives clear and consistent nutrition messages, rather than confused 'latest fad' ones.

## ACTIVITIES PUBLIC HEALTH DIETITIANS AND NUTRITIONISTS MIGHT UNDERTAKE:

- encourage school environments which support healthy and affordable food choices
- support a local marae by providing advice on healthy food options
- work with a local sports trust to evaluate a workplace nutrition/exercise programme
- develop a resource to educate communities on the fat content in key foods
- work with the food industry to change the composition of foods and to offer more healthy choices.

# Public Health Dietitian & Public Health Nutritionist

## What school subjects do you need?

Science subjects such as chemistry and biology are really important, as are mathematics and English. You might also be interested in food and technology.

## What qualifications will you need?

You will need either a Bachelor of Science or a Bachelor of Consumer and Applied Sciences majoring in Human Nutrition (including food service management). You need to complete a Postgraduate Diploma in Dietetics to be a registered dietitian.

To be a registered nutritionist, you need to complete a Postgraduate Diploma in Science (community nutrition) as well as an appropriate undergraduate degree, relevant work experience and professional development.

The University of Otago offers the degree course in Dunedin but has campuses in most main centres for the post-graduate course for dietetics.

Massey University has graduate courses in Human Nutrition and soon will offer an undergraduate course.

Most public health dietitians and nutritionists then undertake a specific qualification in public health.

## Who employs public health dietitians/nutritionists?

District Health Boards, the Ministry of Health or non-government organisations like the Heart Foundation, Cancer Society and iwi providers employ public health dietitians and public health nutritionists. Nutrition is at the heart of many public health issues, so public health dietitians are likely to be in demand for the foreseeable future.

## CAREER 4: PUBLIC HEALTH DIETITIAN

### NICKY, Community and Public Health, Canterbury DHB

AS A DIETITIAN WORKING IN A PUBLIC HEALTH UNIT, NICKY MCCARTHY'S ROLE IS ALL ABOUT using her knowledge of nutrition to help prevent nutrition-related diseases like obesity and type 2 diabetes. She works closely with related organisations including the Heart Foundation, Cancer Society, public health nurses, health promoters, PHOs and community health workers.

She provides nutrition training for health professionals and community workers to help them give correct nutrition-related messages to their patients and actively works with local media to reduce the amount of misinformation published about food and its effects, and to provide up to date and accurate nutrition information to the community.

Nicky has a BSc in Human Nutrition, a Post Graduate Diploma in Dietetics and is studying towards a Post Graduate Diploma in public health. She says the most valuable part of having good qualifications is her ability to work at all levels of public health nutrition.

Nicky's interest in food and health helped her decide to become a dietitian. She enjoys promoting wellness and helping people to get the information they need to prevent disease.

One of the projects she has been involved with is an initiative to improve the health of the 8,000 employees at CDHB by reducing the number of unhealthy food choices from vending machines and cafeterias and replacing them with healthy choices. She says people are initially resistant to change but it is very rewarding to see behaviour change at a population level and know that you are making a big difference.

She says the point isn't always about removing choice, but ensuring that there is choice. So often there are only unhealthy choices on offer, and Nicky works hard with communities to ensure healthy choices are available and attractive.

Nicky is also involved in a project for overweight women who participate in a 6-week programme to help them make healthy lifestyle changes. Nicky has an advisory role working closely with nurses and other health professionals. Initial analysis of the data that has been collected since the programme began is showing pleasing results and Nicky will use these positive evaluations to ensure the programme continues to help local women.

A key element of Nicky's role is taking technical nutrition language and adapting it for key community groups and a wide range of audiences.



“Sometimes in public health change is slow but when we make gains, they are generally big ones and this is hugely rewarding”



# Community health workers use specific cultural or community knowledge, and strong networks within their own communities to promote health.

They are often leaders in their own communities and work as important motivators for health changes. Their expertise lies in the particular structures of their own community. They are often key links between the specialist health knowledge and theory on the one hand, and the needs of communities on the other. They act as 'interpreters' of this knowledge, as advocates for health and change.

The work involves a wide range of health issues, such as alcohol, social environments, tobacco control and oral health. Their role is a critical one. They make public health messages and actions meaningful to those who often are not reached by mainstream and commercial messages.

## ACTIVITIES COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS MIGHT UNDERTAKE:

- advise other professionals about language issues and the need for cultural sensitivity
- work to set up a child car-seat scheme
- arrange a community meeting to address the issue of young people involved in drug taking
- demonstrate low-fat cooking methods to whānau and ringawera
- act as the link between community and health professionals.

# Community Health Worker



## What school subjects do you need?

English, Māori, or your own language are the key requirements. It might be helpful too, to have skills in information technology and science.

## What qualifications will you need?

Until recently community health workers were often employed for their personal attributes, rather than for any particular qualification. In the future it will be expected that community health workers have at least a Certificate in Community Skills or a Certificate in Health Promotion in order to better undertake this critical role. This study may well be undertaken once you are in the job.

## Who employs community health workers?

Iwi providers, other Māori organisations, Pacific, Asian, and new migrant agencies along with District Health Boards, NGOs and a wide range of other organisations currently employ community health workers.

It is likely that as community health workers structure their qualifications and training, they will continue to grow as a critical workforce within public health.

## CAREER 5:

## COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKER

### JUSTEENA, Te Kohao Health, Waikato

JUSTEENA LEAF (NGAPUHI, NGA TE RANGI) HAS BEEN WORKING IN PUBLIC HEALTH AS A community health worker for 10 years. She was inspired as a sixth-former (year 12) by a youth education group who ran a sexual health workshop at her school. She enrolled in a course they offered and, while still at school, co-founded a peer education training group called Te Ahurei a Rangatahi. She is still committed to the organisation as a member of its governing board.

Today Justeena is one of 10 community health workers at Māori provider, Te Kohao Health where she is responsible for programmes relating to Auahi Kore (Smokefree) and Aukati Kaipapa (Smoking Cessation). Her day-to-day work involves health education and working with whānau to bring about behaviour change that will help them give up smoking and pursue healthy lifestyles.

She says doing the course in health promotion at Manukau Institute of Technology was a turning point for her because it gave her a structure and some really valuable theory around which to base her years of flax-roots experience. She is too busy for full-time study at present but is working on short-papers she believes will benefit her work practice.

She draws inspiration from the name of her organisation which is based on a famous saying from the Waikato region.

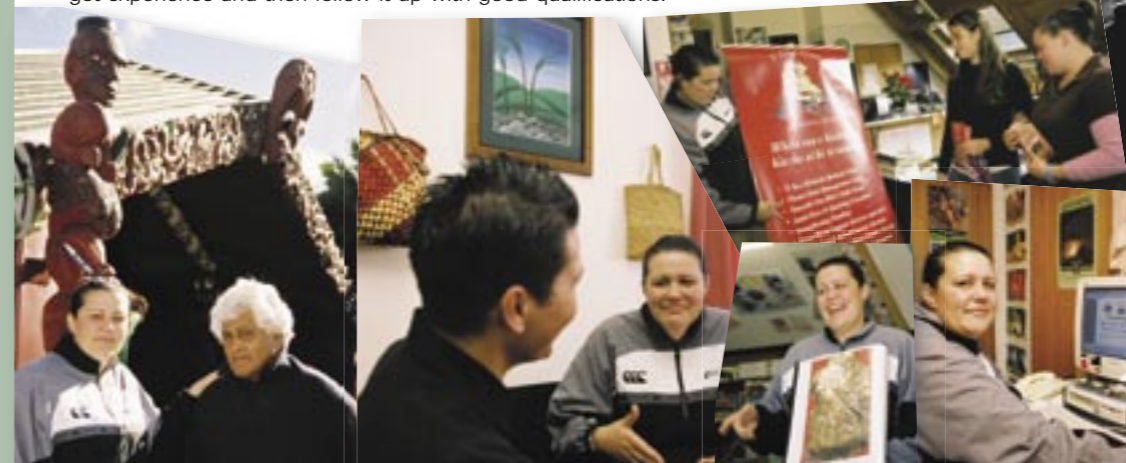
*"Kotahi te kohao o te ngira e kuhuna ai te miro ma, te miro pango, te miro whero"*

*"There is but a single eye of the needle through which white, black and red threads must pass"*

She said that for her, the white, black and red threads represent the diversity of her region and remind her of the need to weave together all parts of the community, toward a single goal of strong, healthy whānau. Therefore she works closely with groups like healthy lifestyle coaches, the Cancer Society, the Heart Foundation, WINZ, local doctors and community leaders who can support the work she is doing.

Justeena believes that to be a successful community health worker you need to be passionate about the kaupapa you are promoting and have a big heart for the people. She says her most important personal attributes are the ability to plan well, cope with uncertainty and her gift of the gab!

Justeena recommends that anyone interested in a job like hers should find someone to buddy up with to get information and advice about the role. She also strongly recommends doing community work to get experience and then follow it up with good qualifications.



**“If I could be three people I would because there is just so much to do. I really wish more people would get into public health because it's such a positive way to make change”**



# Programme co-ordinators work on a huge range of public health issues and are based in many different settings.

While much of the detail of their work is different, they have a common set of tasks in researching, planning, implementing and evaluating programmes. Many roles involve people working in a specific, issues based programme.

Within local and regional government a range of roles contribute to the creation of safer, healthier environments. These positions might include environmental planners, road safety co-ordinators, injury prevention experts, urban designers and others working on specific initiatives such as travel planning.

As an example of a programme co-ordinator role, a travel planner works with schools, groups of schools, and workplaces to develop a plan for daily travel. Public health concerns being addressed here are cleaner air, injury prevention and improved physical activity for children and adults. In this way, environmental aims are contributing to public health aims and vice versa.

## ACTIVITIES TRAVEL PLANNERS MIGHT UNDERTAKE:

- survey current travel patterns for the whole school
- help to establish a walking school bus
- take action to reduce chaos at the school gate
- help young people set up a cycle club.

# Programme Co-ordinator



## What school subjects do you need?

Because programme co-ordinators work in a wide variety of issues and settings, there is no typical profile of school subjects. English, communication skills, mathematics and information technology would lay a sound foundation for a range of programme co-ordinator roles

## What qualifications will you need?

Most programme co-ordinators will need two sets of skills – knowledge in their particular area of work (eg, road safety) and generic skills such as planning and evaluation.

Many qualifications mentioned elsewhere in this booklet will be relevant for programme co-ordinators, particularly qualifications in health promotion/public health and allied fields.

Like most public health roles, ongoing training in specific areas of need is likely to be required over time.

## Who employs programme co-ordinators?

Programme co-ordinators are employed in nearly all agencies undertaking public health work. This includes local and regional government, NGOs, public health units, Primary Healthcare Organisations and iwi providers. While most public health workers are based in public health units some programme co-ordinators like Hannah Mitchell work within local and regional councils.

## CAREER 6:

## PROGRAMME CO-ORDINATOR

### HANNAH, Travel Planner, Auckland Regional Transport Authority

WHILE MOST PUBLIC HEALTH WORKERS ARE BASED IN PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES IN DHBS OR NGOs some programme co-ordinators like Hannah Mitchell work within local and regional councils.

As a travel planner, one of her main programme aims is to get people to use active and sustainable transport and use cars less frequently. This, she says, will have a direct bearing on the health of the population because air and water quality will improve, road safety will improve and people will get more physical exercise.

She and her colleagues have had recent successes at local primary schools where walking buses have cut the number of children who are driven to school, increasing their level of physical activity and getting cars off the road at rush hour.

She engages a number of stakeholders in her travel planning work including schools, local councils, local residents, community boards, sports trusts and police education officers.

Hannah developed her interest in travel planning during her study toward a Masters Degree in Human Geography where she wrote her thesis about removing barriers for children to utilise public space. Her research with 120 children showed that more than 80% of them wanted to walk, cycle or bus to school independently of their parents.

Her child-focused work in community and church groups made her want to advocate for children who she says are often overlooked in travel planning. She says that children need to be given more acknowledgement as citizens so that their right to safety, independence and experience is protected. "If a five-year-old wants to walk to school then we should have the infrastructure to provide for that. It might be wishful thinking at the moment, but its something to aim for."

She loves her role for which she says you need to be very good at communicating and promoting ideas. She says innovation and problem solving is really important as is the ability to manage diverse stakeholders and be well organised.

She says she could take many paths in her future career but wants to remain in environmental and sustainable planning. She says her team is one of the largest and most innovative in the world and is often visited by overseas researchers who have heard of their visionary and novel approaches to travel planning. Other qualifications held by her colleagues include sport and teaching degrees.



“One of the best things about the walking bus project is that while we facilitate and co-ordinate the programmes, they are community-owned and operated. This is what I love about public health – communities solving their own problems”



# Public health physicians are qualified medical doctors who choose to specialise in the health of groups or whole communities rather than working on individual healthcare.

They are involved in promoting health and preventing disease by assessing a community's health needs and by providing services to these communities. Most public health physicians are involved in planning, funding and management of health services, the delivery of public health projects, communicable disease control as well as in academic areas such as research and teaching.

## LIKE OTHER PUBLIC HEALTH ROLES THEY FOCUS ON:

- collective responsibility for health
- whole populations
- prevention emphasis
- underlying social determinants of health
- multidisciplinary methods
- partnerships with the populations served.

## ACTIVITIES PUBLIC HEALTH PHYSICIANS MIGHT UNDERTAKE:

- specialise as a medical officer of health including the exercise of statutory powers as required

# Public Health Physician

- research the health of a particular population or health issue
- plan, deliver and monitor for the resulting health needs
- set up key public health projects and programmes for example in cardiovascular health or immunisation
- provide advice to senior managers and politicians on major health issues and initiatives
- lecture on public health at tertiary institutions.

## What school subjects do you need?

You should aim for excellence in all NCEA subjects, particularly in mathematics, chemistry, physics biology and English.

## What qualifications will you need?

First you will need to become a qualified doctor. This requires a Bachelors degree in Science and then a further degree known as a Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery.

After this you will need to undertake a year as a hospital intern and a minimum of a further two years clinical experience. After this medical training, to become a public health physician requires specialist training of four years in public health medicine training programme which includes a Masters in Public Health and work experience.

## Who employs public health physicians?

Many public health physicians are employed in planning roles in the Ministry of Health or District Health Boards. Many also are employed either full or part-time with universities as researchers or teachers. Others are working in the delivery arm of District Health Boards, developing and overseeing public health programmes to reduce death and disease. Public health physicians also provide services under contract as independent consultants.

## CAREER 7:

## PUBLIC HEALTH PHYSICIAN

### DALE, Waitemata District Health Board

AS MANAGER OF THE HEALTH GAIN TEAM AT WAITEMATA DISTRICT HEALTH BOARD, DALE Bramley (Ngapuhi, Ngati Hine) provides clinical leadership and strategic direction for population health programmes that help prevent diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Other programmes within his broad portfolio include cancer control, healthy lifestyles, child health and the quality use of medicines.

An important focus of his work is to reduce the inequalities that exist between the health of Māori and other New Zealanders. His passion for Māori health gain has taken him to international forums for indigenous health and to New York to pursue a Harkness fellowship. There he studied and compared the health of indigenous people in the USA, Australia, New Zealand and Canada.

In spite of an impressive list of academic achievements including qualifying as a doctor, doing a Masters of Public Health and studying towards an MBA, Dale insists you don't have to be brilliant to pursue a career like his. He believes passion and persistence are key attributes along with dedication and a commitment to lifelong learning.

Dale attributes the success of his programmes to collaboration with a broad range of other public health professionals whose combined work is essential to improving community health.

One of the programmes which Dale and his team are really proud of is the Wellbeing in Schools project which currently has 48 schools participating in a range of initiatives to improve and maintain good health including better nutrition, and increased physical activity.

While committed to the practice of population health programmes as a means to maintaining healthy communities, he says creating the links with primary care is also an important aspect of his work. This means that while the focus of his work is in preventing disease and maintaining wellness there is a need to care for those who have become unwell.

Dale is also involved in health research which he uses to inform his day-to-day work. He says he is a great believer in the need for research but that it must have a practical application to his clinical practice.



**“I am committed to working in public health because I think there are greater gains to be made by working with communities for better health”**



# Policy analysts develop and implement public health policy, programmes and regulation.

This may be for a specific public health issue such as older people's safety, or it may be across the wider public health field.

Most policy analysts have as their main work the ongoing role of planning, researching, writing, discussing and assessing papers and reports.

The work may involve preparing policy and identifying a range of options and recommendations. It may mean conducting research, consulting and gathering information. This could be followed by analysing and presenting this information (qualitative or quantitative) and applying different frameworks and systems for information sorting.

Providing evaluation and informed commentary and feedback to others on a range of matters such as proposed strategies or legislation is often part of this role.

## KEY TASKS FOR A POLICY ANALYST CAN INCLUDE:

- management of projects, information and contracts
- relationship management, co-ordination
- facilitation of advisory groups
- media liaison.

Each role will have its particular emphasis, depending on the priorities of the organisation.

# Policy Analyst

## ACTIVITIES POLICY ANALYSTS MIGHT UNDERTAKE:

- help develop a wellbeing strategy in a territorial local authority (TLA)
- prepare an NGO submission on problem gambling for a select committee
- analyse available literature on suicide prevention and propose specific strategies for future programme development
- help produce a government strategy paper on the future of public health.

## What school subjects do you need?

You will need a very strong track record in all NCEA subjects, especially English and mathematics.

## What qualifications will you need?

To be a policy analyst you will need to hold a relevant qualification that relates to policy. This may be in public health, public policy, social policy, sociology, law, economics or any other discipline where you have undertaken significant analytical work. You would usually require knowledge in the relevant public health field also.

## Who employs public health policy analysts?

NGOs (non government organisations) such as the New Zealand Aids Foundation, National Heart Foundation and Mental Health Foundation, often employ policy analysts, as do some TLAs and District Health Boards.

Policy analysts who work in the Ministry of Health may help prepare and present information on request from the Minister or Health Select Committee. Policy analysts may also be employed in other government agencies concerned with wellbeing such as the Accident Compensation Corporation and the Ministry of Social Development.

## CAREER 8: POLICY ANALYST

### KERIATA, Senior Policy Analyst, New Zealand Drug Foundation

KERIATA STUART (TE ATI AWA, TARANAKI) IS THE SENIOR POLICY ANALYST AT THE NEW ZEALAND Drug Foundation – a non-government organisation (NGO) based in Wellington.

She thrives on the constant variety of working in an NGO with few staff, and characterised by roles which rely on multitasking for their success. Keriatā's role is, by her own admission, difficult to pigeon-hole. It includes researching, monitoring issues, networking with relevant organisations and information analysis to provide objective, evidence-based policy advice about matters relating to alcohol and drugs including tobacco. This work often forms the basis of submissions for shaping government policy and legislation in relation to drugs and alcohol.

Keriatā is currently studying towards her Masters in Public Health. Her work has provided inspiration for her Master's thesis which has a focus on Māori women, alcohol and pregnancy. In August 2006 she presented her research at the Healing Our Spirit Worldwide conference in Canada where she networked with other indigenous peoples working on wellbeing and addiction in indigenous populations.

Keriatā says that prior to about 1989 there were no such positions as policy analysts and so in the past many people, including her, were "accidental" policy analysts. That is they were promoted into the new roles when they were established, because of their research, analysis and writing skills.

Today, however, it is possible to undertake study in public policy and many people choose policy analysis as their career path. Keriatā says one of the benefits of policy work is that the skills are easily transferable to different organisations. Her public health-focused roles have included work with the State Services Commission, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Women's Affairs and the NZ Drug Foundation.

Keriatā suggests that, while obtaining a relevant degree is a good starting point for anyone wanting to pursue a career in policy analysis, it is really important to back that up with practical work experience in a wide range of appropriate organisations. Then, she says, you have a wealth of real-world experience to draw on when doing academic analysis for policy development. She recommends taking school subjects that have an emphasis on good writing and analytical research. She says being a fast reader is an essential skill as a great deal of her work involves literature-based research and information gathering and you often have to come up to speed with a totally new topic really fast.

For Keriatā patience is a key personal attribute for policy analysts because it's difficult to measure short term outcomes. She says you need to take a long term view of your work and trust that you are positively influencing policy makers.

“More and more people doing post graduate studies in public health are pursuing careers in policy analysis because it is so interesting and varied. For me, doing policy work in an NGO is a really good option because my skills contribute to achieving important public health outcomes”





# Training & Qualifications Pathway for Public Health Careers

## THREE MAIN ENTRY POINTS INTO PUBLIC HEALTH CAREERS

**Community experience**  
No tertiary qualifications

**School leavers**

**Other careers** eg, social workers, teachers, nurses

### TERTIARY QUALIFICATIONS

*Examples of some prior qualifications on which further public health qualifications can be built*

#### Undergraduate degrees eg,

- Bachelor of Medicine (Otago or Auckland)
- Bachelor of Science (range of tertiary providers)
- Bachelor of Nursing (range of tertiary providers)
- Bachelor of Consumer and Applied Science (Otago)
- Bachelor of Science – Nutrition (Otago)
- Bachelor of Science – Human Nutrition (Massey)
- Bachelor of Arts (range of tertiary providers)
- Bachelor of Health Science (range of universities)

*Examples of other undergraduate qualifications include Community Health Certificates from a range of institutions, such as wananga and tertiary training institutes.*

### PUBLIC HEALTH QUALIFICATIONS IN NEW ZEALAND

#### COURSE LEVEL COURSE NAME

- |                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Post Graduate                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Doctor of Philosophy in public health</li> <li>• Masters in Public Health (Universities of Auckland, Massey, Otago)</li> <li>• Master of Māori Health with public health specialty (range of tertiary institutions)</li> <li>• Master of Health Science with public health specialty (range of tertiary institutions)</li> <li>• Masters Public Policy (Universities of Massey, Victoria)</li> <li>• Post Graduate Master of Health Management (Otago)</li> <li>• Post Graduate Diploma in Health Management (Otago)</li> <li>• Post Graduate Diploma in Public Health (Universities of Auckland, Massey, Otago)</li> <li>• Post Graduate Diploma in Māori Health with public health specialty (range of tertiary institutions)</li> <li>• Post Graduate Diploma in Health Science with public health specialty (range of tertiary institutions)</li> <li>• Post Graduate Certificate in Public Health (Auckland, Otago)</li> <li>• Post Graduate Certificate in Māori Health with public health specialty (range of tertiary institutions)</li> <li>• Post Graduate Certificate in Health Science with public health specialty (range of tertiary institutions)</li> </ul> |
| Tertiary undergraduate degrees | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bachelor of Health Promotion (AUT University)</li> <li>• Bachelor of Applied Science, Health Protection (AUT University)</li> <li>• Bachelor Health Science with public health focus (range of tertiary institutions)</li> <li>• Bachelor of Health Science with public health focus (range of institutions)</li> <li>• Bachelor of Arts, Public Health (Auckland)</li> <li>• Bachelor of Health Science, Environmental Health (Massey)</li> <li>• Bachelor of Health Studies with public health specialty (Te Wananga O Raukawa)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Tertiary non-degree            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Certificate in Health Promotion – distance taught (Otago)</li> <li>• Certificate of Health Promotion – short course (Manukau Institute of Technology)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

**Issues based training** eg, certificates in injury prevention or community nutrition

# Public Health Careers

## How do you get started?

- Check out the careers outlined in this booklet.
- Check out websites including [www.careers.govt.nz](http://www.careers.govt.nz)
- Talk to careers advisors in schools, polytechs and universities.
- Talk to/visit someone working in the role that interests you. Ring your local District Health Board and ask for the public health unit.

Take action for a dynamic career designed to make a real difference to the health and wellbeing of our communities.

## For more information

Public Health Association of New Zealand

[www.pha.org.nz](http://www.pha.org.nz)

Health Promotion Forum of New Zealand

[www.hpforum.org.nz](http://www.hpforum.org.nz)

Careers Services

[www.careers.govt.nz](http://www.careers.govt.nz)

&

University of Auckland

[www.auckland.ac.nz](http://www.auckland.ac.nz)

Auckland University of Technology

[www.aut.ac.nz](http://www.aut.ac.nz)

Massey University

[www.massey.ac.nz](http://www.massey.ac.nz)

University of Otago

[www.otago.ac.nz](http://www.otago.ac.nz)

Wellington School of Medicine and Health Sciences

[www.wnmeds.ac.nz](http://www.wnmeds.ac.nz)

Manukau Institute of Technology

[www.manukau.ac.nz](http://www.manukau.ac.nz)

Australasian Faculty of Public Health Medicine

[afphm.org.nz](http://afphm.org.nz)

Te Wananga o Raukawa

[www.twor.ac.nz](http://www.twor.ac.nz)

New Zealand Institute of Environmental Health

[www.nzieh.org.nz](http://www.nzieh.org.nz)

**Public health involves collective action from the careers listed here and the wider community.**

**Mā pango, mā whero, ka oti te mahi. Communities working together to achieve healthy outcomes.**

**You could make a contribution to this exciting, challenging and rewarding area of work.**





***“Mā pango, mā whero,  
ka oti te mahi”***

***Communities working together  
to achieve healthy outcomes***