

What is the required MPH fieldwork?

CEPH requires that all MPH students in its accredited programs demonstrate the application of basic public health (PH) concepts through a practice experience that is relevant to the student's area of specialization. Thus, the goal of Penn's MPH fieldwork requirement is for a student to gain real-world PH experience while building PH skills and competencies through engagement in meaningful PH activities. Fieldwork is to be conducted under the supervision of a community preceptor from a community-based fieldwork site. A community preceptor is a professional working at the selected community based fieldwork site who has agreed to work with and advise students until the completion of placement. Fieldwork should be mutually beneficial to the student and the community organization.

Examples of acceptable fieldwork activities include, but are not limited to:

- Designing and delivering PH health education activities,
- Developing a PH resource guide or planning and facilitating immunization or other PH programs,
- Designing and administering PH health surveys and interviews for a PH organization or PH project leader.

Activities conducted as a part of fieldwork must contribute to programming that has the potential to have a population level impact.

Activities must also be easily linked to at least 5 [foundational](#) competencies.

How do I link PH Competencies to my fieldwork?

Students must work with their preceptor and choose 5 relevant [foundational competencies](#) that they will work towards achieving during their fieldwork requirement. These competencies must be listed on the fieldwork Approval Form (See [Fieldwork Approval Form](#)) and also noted on the [Fieldwork Summary Form](#), that is completed after fieldwork, which must include a timelog that documents student hours and activities performed (See Canvas).

What activities are NOT considered appropriate for the fieldwork?

Activities that would not be considered fieldwork include work done solely to meet an academic requirement for a course, including the Capstone course (e.g. conducting a literature review as part of the preparation of a paper or presentation for a course, completing an IRB application for a research project required in a course, or meeting with faculty to plan an assigned course project). Activities that are solely at an academic institution and do not have a community partner are also not considered fieldwork. (e.g. research at Penn where you do not interact with a community stakeholder).

How many hours do I need to spend in the field?

Students are required to work a minimum of 125 hours on a PH project to complete fieldwork.

The 125 hours of applied practice experiences may be concentrated in time or may be spread throughout a student's enrollment.

What is an acceptable fieldwork site?

A wide range of agencies and community-based faculty-led projects can provide a valuable fieldwork experience for students. In general, any organization or faculty member project that researches, provides, plans for, coordinates, organizes, pays for, or regulates public health services in the community is likely a valid training site. Participating sites agree to provide the student with a suitable field experience for a designated period of time. They also agree to assist in the professional development of that student by identifying an appropriate Community Preceptor. Additionally, the site provides the student with all materials, equipment, and space needed to conduct the work in a professional work environment.

University-affiliated settings must be primarily focused on community engagement, typically with external partners. University health promotion or wellness centers may also be appropriate. Regardless of setting, sites must be identified in a manner that is sensitive to the needs of the agencies or organizations involved. Activities meeting the applied practice experience should be mutually beneficial to both the site and the student.

Opportunities may include the following:

- A practicum or internship completed during a summer or academic term
- A program evaluation at a community site such as a non-profit, local health department, etc...
- A research project linked to or engaged with a community-based partner
- Activities linked to service learning, as defined by the MPH program
- Co-curricular activities (eg, service and volunteer opportunities, such as those organized by a student association)
- A health promotion or wellness project at a community site or affiliated with a University, including UPenn

Who is a Community Preceptor?

A Community Preceptor is a PH professional working in or collaborating with a PH focused organization on a PH project. The Community Preceptor is the professional on-site and responsible for supervision of the student. Preferably, this individual will be a PH practitioner. In all cases, the Community Preceptor is expected to have expertise in the area of the student's project, so proper guidance can be provided. The Community Preceptor must all agree to participating in necessary paperwork and processes related to fieldwork.

A variety of PH professionals can be community preceptors. As noted above, it is preferable that the Community Preceptor has an MPH degree, however, this is not necessary if the selected Community Preceptor has the knowledge, skills and experience to properly supervise and mentor the student in the selected area of practice. Examples of appropriate Community Preceptors include:

- A Program Manager at the Philadelphia Department of Public Health
- A Director of Research at a PH organization such as the Maternity Care Coalition or the Food Trust
- A faculty member at Penn overseeing a community based public health initiative that is engaged in fieldwork with a specific community or population.

What are Community Preceptor Tasks?

The preceptor must agree to collaboratively work with the student to design the fieldwork experience, develop a set of learning objectives and goals, outline the expected scope of work and describe the roles and responsibilities of all parties involved. Once the project has started, the Community Preceptor is responsible for supervising the student in the field, assessing their performance, and assuring the student experience is rich and effective.

Specific tasks include:

- Orient the student to the project/organization, to other staff members and to the community in which the project/organization is located.
- Identify and/or tailor a PH project of significance and work with the student to identify responsibilities and/or deliverables for this project. Develop a Scope of Work and related learning objectives, to be outlined in the Fieldwork Approval Form, which reflects expectations for the assigned PH project.
- Collaborate with the student to create a work schedule for their fieldwork.
- Ensure that any research involving human subjects that is intended for publication and/or presentation has IRB approval and that the student's role, if any, meets IRB requirements.
- Provide adequate physical facilities and equipment for the student to perform assigned work.
- Meet regularly with the student during the fieldwork to assess progress and provide performance feedback.
- Make sure the student has appropriate training and equipment to ensure safety as per OSHA regulations (as appropriate).
- Notify the MPH Program of any potential problems regarding the student's progress that cannot be resolved after speaking with the student.
- Evaluate the student's performance at the completion of fieldwork on forms provided by the MPH Office (see Canvas).

What forms do I need to complete for fieldwork?

Students need to complete three forms/documents and submit a MINIMUM of 2 deliverables over the course of their fieldwork. All forms are submitted electronically via Jotform and can be found on Canvas. Required fieldwork paperwork:

- Fieldwork Approval Form
- Fieldwork Summary Form
 - Fieldwork Hours Log – template on Canvas, to be uploaded to the summary form.
 - MINIMUM of two deliverables submitted electronically on the summary form which convey application of foundational competencies (i.e. written reports, presentations, data briefs, etc.). *Note: The materials may originate from multiple experiences or a single, intensive experience with one site.*

The approval form and activity log requires signatures from the Student and of the Community Preceptor. For fieldwork to be finalized, the Community Preceptor also is expected to fill out a [student evaluation form](#). This form is not shared with the student, but fieldwork cannot be considered completed until it is received.

When do I submit the fieldwork forms?

All forms noted above must be submitted to online via JotForm. **The [approval form](#) must be submitted within one week of placement at the latest; the other forms are to be submitted at the conclusion of placement. All forms can be downloaded or accessed electronically on canvas. *Note: all forms related to fieldwork ([approval](#), [fieldwork summary](#) [which includes your fieldwork hours log]) need to be received by the MPH Office no later than 6 weeks prior to the student's expected graduation date.**

Can dual degree students double count Fieldwork hours if their other degree program also includes a Required Fieldwork Experience?

Yes. Dual degree students can count fieldwork hours also being applied to the requirements of their other degree program, as long as 125 hours of this time includes work on a PH relevant project which contributes to population level impact. Further, all fieldwork activities undertaken by the student must be linked to selected competencies within the MPH Program and qualify as an appropriately directed and supervised experience. Contact Elaine Weigelt to check if your fieldwork placement for your other degree program meets the MPH fieldwork requirements.

Can the Fieldwork and Capstone Project be integrated?

Yes. Students have the option of combining their Fieldwork and Capstone Project. Combined projects must include 125 hours of fieldwork and a final, culminating project that meets the requirements of the Capstone course and Capstone Mentor.

Can I complete my fieldwork at my current workplace?

Students working at PH-focused organizations can only do their fieldwork at that site if the project they take on to fulfill their 125 hour fieldwork is outside of their normal, day-to-day activities and job description. Additionally, the student's selected Community Preceptor cannot be their current supervisor.

Can I waive my Fieldwork requirement based on previous experience prior to coming to Penn?

No. Students with current or prior PH work experience cannot waive the fieldwork requirement.

Additional questions? Contact Elaine Weigelt at elaine.weigelt@penmedicine.upenn.edu.

Students may set up consulting appointments Elaine Tran, CPHI Community Outreach Program Manager or to help with placement. Please fill out a [pre-meeting information sheet](#) and contact Elaine (elaine.weigelt@penmedicine.upenn.edu) to set up an appointment.