

WHAT IS HEALTH EDUCATION?

- Health education is a social science that draws from the biological, environmental, psychological, physical and medical sciences to promote health and prevent disease, disability and premature death through education-driven voluntary behavior change activities.
- Health education is the development of individual, group, institutional, community and systemic strategies to improve health knowledge, attitudes, skills and behavior.
- The purpose of health education is to positively influence the health behavior of individuals and communities as well as the living and working conditions that influence their health.

WHY IS HEALTH EDUCATION IMPORTANT?

- Health education improves the health status of individuals, families, communities, states, and the nation.
- Health education enhances the quality of life for all people.
- Health education reduces premature deaths.
- By focusing on prevention, health education reduces the costs (both financial and human) that individuals, employers, families, insurance companies, medical facilities, communities, the state and the nation would spend on medical treatment.

DO I REALLY NEED TO HIRE A HEALTH EDUCATOR?

Para-professionals and health professionals from other disciplines are not familiar with the specialized body of health education knowledge, skills, theories, and research, nor is it their primary interest or professional development focus. This will limit their effectiveness with clients and their cost-effectiveness to you. In the end, you will get what you hire. What do you need? A “technologist” who understands the art and science of the field can contribute actively to your health education initiative.

WHAT CAN I EXPECT A TRAINED HEALTH EDUCATOR TO BE ABLE TO DO? Among the many skills they have, here are a few:

- ✓ Assess individual and community needs
- ✓ Plan health education programs
- ✓ Develop health education programs
- ✓ Coordinate health education programs
- ✓ Implement health education programs

- ✓ Manage health education programs & personnel
- ✓ Evaluate health education programs
- ✓ Write grants
- ✓ Build coalitions
- ✓ Identify resources
- ✓ Make referrals
- ✓ Develop social marketing and mass media campaigns
- ✓ Organize/ mobilize communities for action
- ✓ Handle controversial health issues/content
- ✓ Advocate for health-related issues
- ✓ Encourage healthy behavior
- ✓ Use a variety of education/training methods
- ✓ Develop audio, visual, print and electronic materials
- ✓ Conduct research
- ✓ Write scholarly articles

WHAT DO I ASK WHEN INTERVIEWING A HEALTH EDUCATOR?

What is your health education training?

- Do you have a degree in health education?
- What health education courses did you take?
- What skills did you learn?
- What projects did you complete in your courses or your internship?
- How do these projects reflect your health education knowledge and skills?
- Is the program from which you graduated accredited, and if so, by whom?
- How have you kept current in terms of professional development and continuing education since completing your degree?
- Do you have a portfolio that documents your school and work experience as they relate to health education.

Over 250 colleges and universities in the US offer undergraduate B.A. or B.S. degrees in Health Education or similarly titled majors to prepare students for health education careers, or graduate study.

Many colleges and universities offer masters degree programs (M.A., M.S. or M.Ed. degrees) in school or community health education, health promotion and other related titles.

Approximately two-dozen schools offer master of public health (MPH degree) programs with Community Health Education tracks.

Doctoral degrees (Ph.D., Ed.D., or Dr.P.H.) in Health Education or similarly titled programs also are available across the country.

Degree programs may be accredited voluntarily by the National Council on the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), the Council on Education in Public Health (CEPH) or jointly by the Society for Public Health Education and the Association for the American Association of Health Education (SOPHE/AAHE) Baccalaureate Program Approval Committee (SABPAC.)

Many professional preparation programs encourage their students to prepare professional portfolios to share with potential employers.

What is your health education experience?

- In what health education settings have you worked?
- What tasks have you performed in that setting?
- What skills and knowledge did you use to perform those tasks?
- Of which professional health education organizations are you a member?
- What leadership roles have you played in any of these organizations?

What certifications do you hold?

- Are you a Certified Health Education Specialist?

If you are certified, what are your plans for recertification?

Nationally, voluntary credentialing as a Certified Health Education Specialist (CHES) is available from the National Commission for Health Education Credentialing, Inc (NCHEC).

CHES competencies are generic to the practice of health education, whether it takes place in schools, colleges, workplaces, medical care settings, public health settings or other educational settings of the community.

Health Education teachers are certified by individual states.

WHO CAN HELP ME FIND A QUALIFIED HEALTH EDUCATOR?

Member Organizations of the Coalition of National Health Education Organizations (CNHEO) are excellent resources when you're looking to hire a health educator.

Most of the organizations have newsletters and job banks.

American Association for Health Education

1900 Association Drive, Reston, VA 20191

800-213-7193

<http://www.aahperd.org/aahe.html>

American College Health Association

PO Box 28937

Baltimore, MD 21240

410-859-1500

<http://www.acha.org>

American School Health Association

7263 State Route 43

PO Box 708

Kent, OH 44240

330-678-1601

<http://www.ashaweb.org>

Association of State and Territorial Directors of Health Promotion and Public Health Education

750 First Street, NE, Suite 1050

Washington, DC 20002

202-289-6636

<http://www.astdhpphe.org/>

Eta Sigma Gamma

The National Professional Health Education Honorary

2000 University Avenue

Muncie, IN 47306

765-285-2258

<http://www.etasigmagamma.org>

Public Health Education and Health Promotion Section

School Health Education and Services Section

American Public Health Association

800 "I" Street, NW

Washington, DC 20002

202-777-APHA (2742)

<http://www.apha.org>

Society for Public Health Education

750 First Street, NE, Suite 910

Washington, DC 20002

202-408-9804

<http://www.sophe.org>

Society of State Directors of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation

1900 Association Drive

Reston, VA 20191-1599

703-476-3402