

Maine Public  
Health Association

MENTOR  
PROGRAM

# MPHA MENTOR PROGRAM

The Maine Public Health Association (MPHA) is the state's oldest, largest, and most diverse association for public health professionals. We represent more than 500 individual members and 40 organizations across the state. As a statewide nonprofit association, we advocate, act, and advise on critical public health challenges, aiming to improve the policies, systems, and environments that underlie health inequities – but which also have potential to improve health outcomes for all people in Maine. We are not tied to a national agenda, which means we are responsive to the needs of Maine's communities, and we take that responsibility seriously.

The mission of MPHA is to improve and sustain the health and well-being of all people in Maine through health promotion, disease prevention, and the advancement of health equity. MPHA is a statewide, non-profit membership organization that promotes a healthy Maine through advocacy, education, community connection, and coalition-building. MPHA implements the following strategies to achieve its mission:

- Provide leadership in public health;
- Advance local, state and federal public health policy;
- Promote and provide public health training and education; and
- Recognize model programs and public health leaders in Maine.

Maine Public Health Association's Mentor Program is an opportunity for MPHA members to grow professionally through skill attainment, knowledge building, and networking, while strengthening the overall public health workforce in Maine. Each cohort of mentors and mentees participates for one year, with a call for applications in October, and the program beginning the following January and running through December of that year.

The goals of MPHA's Mentor Program are to:

- Enhance the skills and knowledge of public health students and early career professionals;
- Provide learning and networking opportunities for mentors and mentees to enrich their relationships and learning; and
- Strengthen the public health workforce.

**Mentoring IS:** a commitment, being open minded, sharing an experience, improving communication skills, increasing networking opportunities, strengthening professional skills, and expanding one's learning.

**Mentoring IS NOT:** a guarantee of a job, internship or job recommendation, therapy, supervision, tutoring, effortless.

# MPHA MENTOR PROGRAM

## Application Process

Public health professionals interested in serving as mentors must complete an application describing their educational background, career experience, public health topics of expertise, and skills they are interested in sharing as a mentor.

Public health students and early career professionals seeking a mentoring experience must complete an application describing their educational background, career experience (if any), professional goals, public health topics they want to learn about/are interested in and skills they are seeking mentoring on.

All applications must be submitted to MPHA by the designated date for the matching process. Applications can be found on our website.

## Matching Process

Each mentor is assigned 1 mentee unless they indicate preference for more than 1 mentee. Mentors and mentees will be matched based on their applications, with a goal to align shared public health topics of interest and skill assistance. MPHA works to create the best possible matches.

## Program Evaluations

Each Mentor Program participant will be asked to complete an evaluation at the half way point and end of the mentoring period to enable MPHA to obtain feedback and make improvements to the Mentor Program.

# MENTOR OVERVIEW

## Mentor Qualifications

Mentors are required to have at least 5 years of experience in public health or a related field. Mentors must be current members of MPHA (or willing to become a member by the start of the program) and remain in good standing throughout the duration of the Mentor Program.

## Mentor Expectations

- Fully engage with the mentee in a professional manner
- Establish goals and meeting expectations with their mentee
- Serve as a role model, informal advisor, and resource
- Offer constructive feedback in a positive manner
- Communicate openly and honestly
- Attend all Mentor Program events
- Complete evaluations upon request by MPHA
- Contact the MPHA Membership Manager with questions or concerns

## Benefits to Mentor

- Contribute to the professional development of Maine's public health workforce
- Improve communication and advising skills
- Develop mentoring skills
- Educate mentees about respective fields of work
- Share experiences, skills, and expertise
- Expand professional networks
- Acquire fresh enthusiasm for own professional career

## Guidelines and Tips for Mentors

- Provide advice and suggestions regarding career development and opportunities within the public health field
- Encourage mentee to take initiative in the relationship
- Offer advice regarding educational and/or career goals
- Provide options and supports, but not necessarily solutions
- Share applicable experiences
- Foster an environment of mutual trust, open communication and respect
- Facilitate learning
- Acknowledge mentee's contributions and progress toward goals
- Give specific and simple feedback, respectfully
- Encourage questions from the mentee
- Understand what the mentee would like to discuss
- Response to messages from the mentee within 48 hours
- Keep it positive and professional
- Respect the mentee's time

# MENTEE OVERVIEW

## Mentee Qualifications

Mentees are required to either be pursuing a degree in the field of public health or a related field (undergraduate or graduate) or have entered the field of public health in the past two years. Mentees must be current members of MPHA (or willing to become a member by the start of the program) and remain in good standing throughout the duration of the Mentor Program.

## Mentee Expectations

- Fully engage with the mentor in a professional manner
- Establish goals and meeting expectations with their mentor
- Prepare for each meeting with relevant questions or points of discussion
- Communicate openly and honestly
- Come to meetings with a positive mindset, ready to learn
- Follow through between meetings on recommended tasks, as relevant
- Attend all Mentor Program events
- Complete evaluations upon request by MPHA
- Contact the MPHA Membership Manager with questions or concerns

## Benefits to Mentee

- Receive 1-1 career and professional guidance and gain practical resources
- Participate in discussions regarding career interests
- Make connections within Maine's public health field
- Connect education and training to professional experience
- Discuss a variety of public health careers and workplaces
- Receive constructive feedback and advice for professional goals and skills
- Improve specific professional skills and knowledge
- Explore professional development opportunities

# MENTEE OVERVIEW

## Guidelines and Tips for Mentees

- Discuss the experiences the mentor has had in the public health field
- Be open to constructive feedback and discussion regarding educational and/or career goals, as well as alternative approaches
- Inquire about the mentor's place of work
- Ask questions about types of public health jobs
- Attend networking or other public health events with the mentor to learn more about opportunities in the field
- Being willing to step outside of comfort zones at networking events
- Be respectful and responsible
- Respond to messages from the mentor within 48 hours
- Ask the mentor for feedback, suggestions, strategies, and resources
- Show evidence of following through and utilizing advice
- Keep it positive and professional
- Appreciate and respect the mentor's time and send thank you notes and emails

# SUGGESTED MEETING TOPICS

## Suggested Meeting Topics

### Initial Meeting

- Formal introductions
- Discuss academic and professional goals, and establish goals for the relationship
- Discuss backgrounds and career interest on both sides
- Discuss expectations
- Agree on a meeting schedule
- Determine the best method for communication

### Additional Meetings – Professional Development

- Introduce to colleagues or contacts
- Review and provide feedback on mentee's resume/portfolio/CV
- Review mentor's resume/CV/portfolio
- Provide insight into mentor's public health experience
- Develop interviewing or informational interviews skills
- Provide guidance on seeking a job or postdoc
- Discuss public health fields (e.g., academia, non-profit, government, private sector, healthcare)

### Additional Meetings – Professional Service

- Professional organization and committee involvement

### Additional Meetings – Personal Life and Balance Issues

- Discuss how personal and professional life can fit together
- Discuss strategies for time and relationship management

### Final Meeting

- Discuss how the relationship has been beneficial
- Ask for or provide any final feedback
- Review goals and progress toward achieving goals
- Decide on the next form of the relationship, if any

## Stages of Formal Mentoring Relationships:

1. Build the relationship - Exchange information and establish goals
2. Work toward goals and deepen the engagement
3. End the formal mentoring relationship and plan for the future

# PROGRAM SCHEDULE

## October

- Call for mentee and mentor applications
- Current Mentor Program pairs encouraged to attend the MPHA Annual Conference together

## November

- Application period closes

## December

- Current cohort of Mentor Program ends; complete evaluation
- New mentor and mentee pairings are completed

## January

- Mentor Program Kick-Off event – program begins with informational and educational event

## February

- Pairs hold initial meetings, set goals, and establish meeting expectations and schedules

## March

- MPHA check-in on pairs

## April-September

- Pairs meet according to their schedules
- Facilitated events and check-ins

# RESOURCES

## Planning for and Defining a Mentoring Relationship New Mentees

It is important to spend some time thinking about what you want out of your mentoring relationship(s). Since mentoring may involve both people you know and strangers, the most successful relationships happen when partners have thought through their definition of mentoring, and their own preferences and parameters for their relationships before embarking on such relationships.

Once you have defined for yourself what mentoring means for you, confer with your Mentor and mentoring peers to see whether they share your view of mentoring. Having this initial discussion with your mentoring partners will help to avoid potential problems.

Common problems that surface in mentoring relationships are:

A. Miscommunication, lack of communication: Mentees have been hesitant to “bother” their mentors with “silly questions” when they are obviously such busy people. Conversely, Mentors who were not being asked for help did not want to interfere in their Mentees’ lives by seeming pushy, and thus did not contact their Mentees without express invitation. This concern for the mentoring partner’s freedom, time and independence can lessen the impact and usefulness of the mentoring relationship. It is important for you to be pro-active in your relationship with your mentors and your peers so that you get what you need. Your mentors cannot begin to help if they do not know your questions and concerns.

B. Expectations: Mentees’ expectations for their mentors can be unrealistic. One or two mentors cannot be the only resource on every topic. Mentors should be able to admit they do not have expertise in a particular area but should then look for other people who might be an appropriate resources on that topic.

C. Realities: Remember: if you have been paired with a stranger, this is a somewhat artificial way of establishing a relationship and means that, through no fault of the Mentee or the Mentor, some relationships may not gel as well as others. This possibility is much less likely if you begin your mentoring relationships with a frank and honest discussion about what you want and need, and have the Mentors speak frankly about how they see the role of Mentor.

The following page is designed to help you think through what type of relationship you would like with your Mentor.

# RESOURCES

## Planning Your Mentoring Relationship

This worksheet is designed to help you plan your mentoring relationship.

A mentor might be defined as a(n):

- guide, trusted counselor
- advocate
- friend
- coach
- resource for information
- other?

Ideally, which of these roles do I see my mentor playing?

What types of issues do I want to discuss with my mentor?

The following list represents a compilation of possible activities, topics and mutual interests that are possible for exploration within a mentoring partnership. These are merely examples.

### Professional Development

- Introduction to colleagues or contacts
- Critiquing mentee's resume/portfolio/CV
- Review of mentor's resume/CV/portfolio
- Insight into mentor's public health experience
- Developing interviewing or informational interviews skills
- Guidance on how to seek a job or postdoc
- Discussion of different sectors in public health (e.g., academia, non-profit, government, healthcare)
- Attend events and professional development activities together
- Job shadow

### Professional Service

- Committee involvement
- Professional organization involvement

### Personal Life and Balance Issues

- Discussion of how personal and professional life can fit together, and strategies for time and relationship management

What types of issues are off-limits in our mentoring relationship?

How often would I like to communicate with my mentor?