

Program Director

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Mission Statement

The mission of the Master of Science (MS) degree in Health Policy is to prepare students to enter academic or research careers in health policy. The program prepares candidates for subsequent doctoral study or for research roles in health-delivery systems, regulatory and other government agencies, or university settings. The program emphasizes individual study design and allows students to focus their training in particular areas of health policy (for example, long-term care policy, maternal and child health policy, and health services research and policy).

Overview

The Department of Health Policy is the home for health policy studies and research at the GW School of Public Health and Health Services (SPHHS). The Department focuses on virtually all facets of U.S. health policy, both public health and health services, and emphasizes preparing students to understand and analyze health policy matters in a broad, cross-cutting context. Among schools of public health nationwide the GW SPHHS Department of Health Policy is unique; it has been created to take maximum advantage of our location in Washington, DC, the nation's health policy-making epicenter. The MS in Health Policy is for students who wish to enter careers that focus on academia, research, and publication. The MS degree frequently serves as a prerequisite for doctoral programs and is intended to increase both substantive knowledge and research skills. The MS also is suitable as a terminal degree for students, such as physicians in fellowship training, who wish to gain research skills.

Competencies

Graduates of this program will demonstrate functional competence to:

- ◆ **Identify the wide-ranging issues that dominate the modern health policy debate at all levels of government.** Students will be able to understand, discuss, and integrate the many complex issues that are the focus of current and past health policy discourse at the federal, state and local levels of government.
- ◆ **Demonstrate skills in and familiarity with health policy analysis.** Students will master the mechanics of health policy analysis and will be able to conduct policy analysis addressing current and past health policy issues to (1) describe the key problem under review; 2) identify relevant background to inform the issue; 3) describe analytically the landscape and context in which the issue occurs; 4) identify meaningful options to address the policy issue; and 5) recommend a course of action.
- ◆ **Conduct original health policy analysis and research that uses quantitative and qualitative research methods.** Students will complete a master's thesis that includes original research on a topic of their choosing. Students will evaluate various qualitative and quantitative methods for their research project and will select one or more methods for the thesis. Students will include in their master's thesis a description of the policy implications of their research.
- ◆ **Demonstrate familiarity with the policy making processes that control the development and implementation of health policy.** Students will develop an understanding of the federal, state and local processes that commonly occur for policy making.

- ◆ **Apply policy analysis to key issues in public health and health services research.** Students will learn to integrate knowledge of the mechanics of policy analyses into short and long papers addressing specific topics in current and past health policy debates.

Course Requirements

All MS-Health Policy program students enroll for 30 core credits and 18 elective credits. The 48-credit requirement includes a Masters Thesis. Students may wish to give greater emphasis to either public health or health services policy as they develop their course of study with their advisor.

**School of Public Health and Health Services
Master of Science - Health Policy**

**Program-at-a-Glance
2010-2011**

Required Courses and Electives

Required Core Courses		Credits	Semesters Offered	Grade
PubH 202	Biostatistical Applications for Public Health	3	Fall, Spring, Summer	
PubH 203	Principles and Practice of Epidemiology	3	Fall, Spring, Summer	
PubH 205	Policy Approaches to Public Health	2	Fall, Spring, Summer	
PubH 242	Clinical Epidemiology and Decision Analysis + PubH 209 Topics by the same name for 1 credit	2 + 1	Spring	
PubH 281	Fundamentals for Policy: Public Health and Health Care	2	Fall, Spring, Summer	
PubH 283	Statistical Analysis in Health Policy	2	Fall, Spring, Summer	
PubH 285	Introduction to Health Policy Analysis	2	Fall, Spring, Summer	
PubH 287	Advanced Health Policy Analysis	2	Fall, Spring, Summer	
PubH 292 PubH 293	Health Services and Law [OR] Public Health and Law	3	Fall, Spring, Summer Spring	
PubH 294	Health Economics and Financing	3	Fall, Spring, Summer	
PubH 215.16	Health Policy Seminar	2	Fall, Spring, Summer	
PubH 213	Master's Thesis	3	See Advisor	
Sub Total	Core Courses	30		
Sub Total	Electives – Any SPHHS course	18	Summer, Fall, Spring	
Total	Degree Credits	48		

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

Graduation Requirements

1. **Graduate Credit Requirement.** 48 graduate credits are required.
2. **Course Requirements.** Successful completion of the core and elective courses, including completion of the Master's Thesis, are required.
3. **Grade Point Requirement.** A 3.0 (B average) overall grade point average is required.
4. **Time Limit Requirement.** The degree must be completed within five years.
5. **Transfer Credit Policy.** Up to 12 graduate credits that have not been applied to a previous graduate degree may be transferred to the MS. The courses must have been taken within 3 years from an accredited institution with grades of B or better.

**Core Courses
(30 Credits)**

PubH	202	Biostatistical Applications for Public Health	3	Application of biostatistical principles to critical analysis of retrospective studies, prospective studies, and controlled clinical trials, as well as studies in the health services literature. Selection, basic calculations, and interpretation of statistical methods for detection of significant associations and differences. Offered Fall, Spring, Summer 10 week.
PubH	203	Principles and Practice of Epidemiology	3	General principles, methods, and applications of epidemiology. Outbreak investigations, measures of disease frequency, standardization of disease rates, study design, measures of association, hypothesis testing, bias, effect modification, causal inference, disease screening, and surveillance. Case studies apply these concepts to a variety of infectious, acute, and chronic health conditions affecting the population. Offered Fall, Spring, Summer 10 wk.
PubH	205	Policy Approaches to Public Health	2	Introductory multidisciplinary course focusing on the interplay of all aspects of global public health on health policy problems. Students will learn how health policy is made, how health care and public health services are delivered, and how to define and analyze key health policy problems drawing on the perspectives and skills of the public health disciplines. Offered Fall, Spring, Summer 10 week.
PubH	281	Fundamentals for Policy: Public Health and Health Care	2	Provides an overview of public health and health care in the United States as an introduction to the study and analysis of health policy. It covers the governmental framework, institutions, financing streams, workforce, constituencies, and interest groups engaged in the health sector to ensure that students begin their analytic policy training with grounding in the political, economic and social realities of public health and health care. Offered Fall, Spring, Summer
PubH	242	Clinical Epidemiology and Decision Analysis	2 + 1	Quantitative and qualitative approaches to decision making, including risk- benefit analysis, decision analysis, and cost-effective analysis. Applications to technology assessment; development of clinical guidelines. Prerequisites: PubH 202, 203. Offered Spring. Note: MPH and MS Health Policy and Doctoral Students concurrently take PubH 209 topics course by the same name for 1 credit.

PubH	283	Statistical Analysis in Health Policy	2	Applications of quantitative and statistical methods of data analysis for health policy and health services research. The student will learn how to conduct data analyses using Stata®, a widely used statistical and data analysis software package and apply these skills for health policy and health services research purposes. It will build upon the principles of statistics taught in PubH 202 and reinforce these principles with practical hands-on experience in programming and analysis for health policy.
PubH	285	Introduction to Health Policy Analysis	2	Core elements of health policy analysis: problem definition, background, the political, economic, and social landscape; development of policy options and recommendations. Written, graphic, and oral presentation skills associated with policy analysis. Prerequisite: PubH 281. Offered Summer, Fall, Spring.
PubH	287	Advanced Health Policy Analysis	2	Provides instruction in critical elements of health policy applications: problem definition; political, social, and economic assessment of a problem; program evaluation and data analysis; development of policy options; and the written and oral presentation of findings and recommendations. Hands-on application of basic quantitative tools in health policy. Prerequisite: PubH 285. Offered Summer, Fall, Spring.
PubH	292	Health Services and Law	3	This course addresses the relationship of law and the legal system in the United States to the individual health care delivery system. It examines how various sources of law embody health policy and affect the organization, delivery, and financing of health care, as well as the regulation of health care quality and patient rights. Offered Summer, Fall, Spring.
PubH	293	Public Health and Law	3	Examines how law can both promote and impede the public's health. Introduces students to the legal concepts that underlie the public health system and that inform public health policymaking in the United States. Topics to be covered include the role of law in public health care and policy (e.g., governmental powers vs. civil liberties, regulation of public health, tobacco regulation), managed care and public health, the role of public health officials in shaping law and policy, and public health law reform. Offered Spring.
PubH	294	Health Economics and Financing	3	Covers economic principles as they apply to health services financing and public health policy: provider payment policy and cost containment, supply of health providers and services, individual demand for health care services, and cost-benefit analyses and economic incentives to promote public health goals. Prerequisite: basic economics course. Offered Fall, Spring.
PubH	215.16	Health Policy Seminar	2	The course is the culminating experience for students in the MS Health Policy degree program, and must be taken during the student's final semester of his or her master's degree work. The course includes seminar discussions and analysis of major health policy topics. Prerequisites: PubH 285, 287. Offered Fall, Spring.
PubH	213	Master's Thesis	3	See Advisor.
Sample Electives (18 Credits)				
PubH	305	Advanced Maternal and Child Health Policy	2	In-depth exploration of maternal and child health policy in the U.S., with a particular emphasis on the role of personal and public health services for women, children, youth and their families in the context of health and human services system change. The course will also build knowledge in the process of public policy development at the national, state and local level in the area of maternal and child health and will build on the methods of policy analysis, including problem identification, the development of policy overview and synthesis documents, and the preparation of policy options papers. Prerequisite: PubH 285 or PubH 373. Offered Spring.
PubH	306	Civil Rights Issues in Health Care	2	Examines the intersection of health care and civil rights law in the United States: the history and legacy of health care discrimination in the U.S.; the various forms of health care discrimination; legislative and regulatory interventions to combat discrimination and create/enforce/restore health care civil rights; and the unique place that abortion rights holds in U.S. law and society. Prerequisite: PubH 292. Offered Spring.

PubH	307	Federal Budget Process for Health Policy	1	Focuses on how the Congressional budget process shapes the funding and design of federal health care programs, ranging from entitlement programs like Medicare to appropriated programs like community health centers. Discussions will cover budget resolutions, appropriations bills, and budget reconciliation legislation, as well as Congressional procedures and committees through which they are considered. Prerequisite: PubH 281. Offered Summer.
PubH	308	Health Care Corporate Compliance	2	Addresses the federal laws and regulations that affect U.S. health care industry participants, particularly those relating to the prevention of fraud and abuse, and the role of corporate compliance programs. Prerequisite: PubH 292 or HSML 215. Offered Spring.
PubH	309	Law, Medicine, and Ethics	2	Addresses those issues in law, ethics, and policy that focus on the scope and limits of individual autonomy within the health system. Prerequisite: PubH 292 or instructor's permission. Offered Fall.
PubH	310	Medicare/Medicaid Law and Policy	2	Examines selected topics in the design and operation of Medicare and Medicaid, the public insurance problems in the United States. Introduces students to legal issues from the perspectives of program beneficiaries, health care providers, and program administrators. Prerequisite: PubH 285. Offered Spring.
PubH	311	Minority Health Policy	2	Introduces students to the concept of health disparities and the implications of disparities for health care practice and policy. Students will learn how disparities are defined and measured, as well as emerging approaches in practice and policy to reducing disparities. Prerequisite: 285. Offered Fall.
PubH	312	Pharmaceutical Policy	2	Examines legal and regulatory frameworks related to the demand for and supply and quality of pharmaceutical products. It will highlight policies specific to drug development, pricing, reimbursement, drug utilization, dissemination of information, and post-marketing surveillance. Prerequisite: PubH 281. Offered Fall.
PubH	313	Primary Health Care Policy	2	Explores politics and policy of the provision of primary health care in America. The class covers the rise of the field of primary care and how it is supported and financed, as well as the role of insurers and government in regulation and oversight in the areas of access, cost, and quality. Prerequisite: PubH 285. Offered Spring.
PubH	291	Federal Policymaking and Policy Advocacy	2	The course provides students with an understanding of the federal health policymaking process, including an overview of the legislative, administrative, and judicial processes that impact federal health policymaking. The course reviews the federal budget process and outlines the authorization and appropriation processes. Finally, the course uses an advocacy campaign framework to demonstrate common techniques and strategies used to advance legislative and regulatory policies including coalition building, the use of policy studies and media relations, among others.
PubH	209	Health Policy Topics	1-2	See Advisor or course schedules.

