Public health nurses play an important role in population health. They impact outcomes of whole communities as opposed to small clients groups. Public health nurses design, direct, and deliver programs to address prevention of pressing public health threats such as smoking, communicable diseases, injuries, opioid abuse, and environmental concerns. They also shape public health through advocacy and health policy development.

With experience in public health settings, nurses can obtain a Certification in Public Health (CPH). The certification is offered to other health disciplines, not just nurses. For more information and eligibility requirements, you can visit the website https://www.nbphe.org/

This career is in high demand especially with healthcare reform efforts to shift care from acute disease management to preventative efforts. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic has emphasized the need for public health nurses.

Public health nurses need to be self-directed and have courage to work autonomously. They need to be good listeners as well as possess sensitivity and compassion for underserved populations. Public health nurses also need creativity for program design and managing scarce resources.

Public health nurses are employed by government agencies, community health centers, and nonprofit organizations. Public health nurses have dynamic roles and could spend their day in a variety of ways.

• Delivering education through presentations at schools, community groups or senior centers on topics such as proper nutrition, disease detection, or safety practices.
• Immunizing children and providing well-baby care in low-income and rural communities.
• Designing and implementing health education campaigns such as health fairs.
• Writing grants for education and prevention programs.
• Participating in disaster preparedness or disaster relief efforts.
• Advocating with local, state, and federal authorities to improve health policy.

Public health nurses must maintain their registered nurse license in the state in which they hold licensure. They must also maintain certification if applicable.

References