

Health Education Careers

Mississippi University for Women

M.S. in Health Education

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 job of a health educator 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

Where Are Health Educators Employed?

- **In schools...** health educators teach health as a subject and promoting and implementing Coordinated School Health Programs, including health services, student, staff, and parent health education, and promote healthy school environments and school-community partnerships.
- **On college/university campuses...** health educators work to create an environment in which students feel empowered to make healthy choices and create a caring community. They identify needs; advocate and do community organizing; teach whole courses or individual classes; develop mass media campaigns; and train peer educators, counselors, and/or advocates. They address issues related to disease prevention; consumer, environmental, emotional, sexual health; first aid, safety and disaster preparedness; substance abuse prevention; human growth and development; and nutrition and eating issues.
- **In business & industry...** health educators perform or coordinate employee counseling as well as education services, employee health risk appraisals, and health screenings. They design, promote, lead and/or evaluate programs about weight control, hypertension, nutrition, substance abuse prevention, physical fitness, stress management, and smoking cessation; develop educational materials; and write grants for money to support these projects. They help companies meet occupational health and safety regulations, work with the media, and identify community health resources for employees.
- **In health care settings...** health educators educate patients about medical procedures, operations, services and therapeutic regimens, create activities and incentives to encourage use of services by high risk patients; conduct staff training and consult with other health care providers about behavioral, cultural, or social barriers to health; promote self-care; develop activities to improve patient participation on clinical processes; educate individuals to protect, promote or maintain their health and reduce risky behaviors; make appropriate community-based referrals, and write grants.
- **In community organizations and government agencies...** health educators help a community identify its needs, draw upon its problem-solving abilities, and mobilize its resources to develop, promote, implement and evaluate strategies to improve its own health status. Health educators do community organizing and outreach, grant-writing, coalition building, advocacy, and develop, produce, and evaluate mass media health campaigns.

Source: American Association for Health Education (AAHE), 2005