

National Board of Public Health Examiners Certified in Public Health (CPH) Exam



Board Facts:

The National Board of Public Health Examiners (NBPHE) was formed in fall 2005 as an independent organization to ensure that students and graduates from schools and programs of public health accredited by the Council on Education of Public Health (CEPH) have mastered the knowledge and skills relevant to contemporary public health. This purpose is accomplished by developing, preparing, administering, and evaluating a voluntary certification exam. The NBPHE includes designated representatives from APHA, APTR, ASPH, ASTHO, and NACCHO, and several at-large members. A full list of the NBPHE is available at www.publichealthexam.org

Certified in Public Health Exam Facts:

Any graduate of a CEPH accredited school or program is eligible to sit for the exam. Any student who will graduate by July 30th of the year in which they wish to sit for the exam can register. The NBPHE verifies the eligibility of all candidates. Deferrals and retakes are allowed.

The cost to register for the exam is \$350 until November 22, 2009 after which it is \$400. Registration closes on April 30, 2010 for the 2010 exam.

To-date, more than 1,000 people have registered for the CPH exam. The exam is offered over a three week period in August at multiple testing sites across the U.S. and around the world. Registrants choose their preferred test date and site.

The exam consists of 200 multiple choice questions covering the core disciplines of public health (biostatistics, epidemiology, environmental health, the social and behavioral sciences, and health policy and management) and the cross-cutting competency domains articulated by the ASPH Masters of Public Health (MPH) competencies (public health biology, leadership, communications, diversity and culture, professionalism, program planning and systems thinking). Item writers from diverse public health disciplines and backgrounds are trained, and the exam is administered, by the National Board of Medical Examiners®. The item bank is constantly refreshed.

Schools and programs are sent summary score reports of their alum's performance on the exam if 10 or more of their graduates sit for the exam; the report contains information on their graduates' relative scores in the discipline and core competency areas.

CPH professionals commit to their life-long learning and ongoing currency in public health by maintaining their CPH status. Maintenance of CPH Certification requires 25 hours of CPH continuing education every year, to be reported every 2 years, and a re-assessment experience to be completed every 10 years. For continuing education, NBPHE proposes an approved-provider model. The re-assessment experience will not be the CPH 200-item examination but the details are still being discussed.

2008 Exam Facts:

The examination was thoroughly evaluated and performed very well. Test metrics included a reliability coefficient of 0.91 and a discrimination factor of 0.21.

Examinees did relatively better on questions related to environmental health, health policy and management and the cross-cutting competencies than they did on biostatistics, epidemiology and the social and behavioral sciences. The passing rate for the 2008 exam was above 70%.

2009 Exam Facts:

In recognition of the challenge of any new examination, examinees from 2008 who did not achieve a score sufficient to earn certification were invited to sit for the 2009 exam at a reduced fee. This will not be repeated. The reliability coefficient was 0.93 and the mean discrimination index was 0.25. The passing rate for the 2009 exam was 74%.

Action Steps to Support the Certified in Public Health process:

Public health employers are strongly urged to support and recognize CPH among their interviewees, hires, current employees, and trainees. Deans and program directors are strongly urged to promote the exam among their graduates and alumni. The NBPHE suggests the following, based on activities of leading employers and educators:

1. Join the growing number of employers who reimburse the registration fee to any employee who earns a score sufficient for certification.
2. Simply champion the exam; a note from leadership goes a long way to spark interest.
3. Recognize and reward employees who become CPH – e.g. preferential recruiting, hiring, promotions, salary increases, and kudos in newsletters and staff meetings.
4. Support maintenance fees and continuing education for CPH professionals.
5. Invite the NBPHE to make a presentation (or invite CPH employees or alumni to speak).
6. Download and show the free monthly webinars from NBPHE (see schedule at bottom of <http://www.nbphe.org/about.cfm>)
7. Donate to the Foundation to Advance Public Health through Certification to recognize high scores in certain domains or to subsidize fees.
8. Volunteer your public health school or program to be a pilot site for an earlier exam.
9. Nominate faculty, staff, employees, and partners as item writers.

Registration is easy, simply go to www.publichealthexam.org and follow the directions. Also on this site is information about the board, frequently asked questions, and other useful links.

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