

WHAT IS PUBLIC HEALTH NURSING



Public Health Nursing Definition:

Public health nursing, as defined by the American Public Health Association's Public Health Nursing Section (2013) as:

“the practice of promoting and protecting the health of populations using knowledge from nursing, social and public health sciences.”

The APHA PHN definition is used as the basis for the Quad Council Coalition of Public Health Nursing Organization's [Community/Public Health Nursing Competencies](#) (QCC C/PHN; 2018), a useful public health nursing competency set that grounded in the public health sciences. The definition is also used as the basis for the American Nurses Association's [Public Health Nursing: Scope and Standards of Practice, 2nd Ed.](#) (2013), and includes practice competencies grounded in the nursing sciences.

The *Scope and Standards of Practice* document defines public health nursing practice as focusing “on population health through continuous surveillance and assessment of the multiple determinates of health with the intent to promote health and wellness, prevent disease, disability, and premature death; and improve quality of life. These population health priorities are addressed through identification, implementation, and evaluation of universal targeted evidence-based programs and services that provide primary, secondary, and tertiary preventative interventions. Public health nursing practice emphasizes primary prevention with the goal of achieving health equity.”

The *Scope and Standards of Practice* also includes *Principles of Public Health Nursing Practice*, based on the *1997 Tenets of Public Health Nursing* found on the Quad Council of Public Health Nursing Organizations [webpage](#). As a central theme of the art and science of public health nursing, the [eight tenets](#) or principles of public health nursing serve to advance the public health nursing goal of promoting and protecting the health of the population. These eight principles are currently being updated by the American Nurses Association Public Health Nursing Scope and Standard of Practice Revision Committee per Susan Little, committee member (October 6, 2020). The draft principles, as of June 2020, include:

1. *The primary focus of the PHN practice is on systematic and comprehensive population-focused assessment, policy development, and assurance.*
2. *The primary obligation is to achieve the greatest good for the greatest number of people or the entire population.*
3. *Primary prevention is the priority in selecting appropriate activities.*
4. *Public health nursing focuses on strategies that create healthy social, environmental, and economic conditions in which populations may thrive.*
5. *Public health nurses collaborate as an equal partner.*
6. *Collaboration with other professions, organizations, and stakeholder groups, as well as the population, is the most effective way to promote and protect the health of the community.*
7. *A public health nurse is obligated to actively identify and reach out to all who might benefit from a specific activity or service.*
8. *Optimal use of available resources and creation of new evidence-based public health strategies are necessary to assure the best overall improvement in the health of the population.*