



ASPPH MESSAGING GUIDE

JUNE 2024

ASPPH ASSOCIATION OF
SCHOOLS & PROGRAMS
OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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INTRODUCTION

Academic public health is at an inflection point. Our field has made a remarkable impact over generations, but there is no denying we face a backlash and daunting challenges today such as:

- The lingering physical and psychological health impacts as well as the social and financial impacts of COVID-19
- Our planet—and our communities—are confronting massive climate-induced harm, introducing diseases that simply weren't real for many of us before
- Gun violence that continues to kill 100 people every single day in America
- Old viruses becoming new again
- Misinformation and disinformation challenging long-held assumptions about the power of science and spreading at rapid speed
- Public health professionals leaving the workforce in record numbers
- Wars are raging in Europe and the Middle East in a manner that is devastating to public health
- Structural racism—and numerous other forms of discrimination—that are embedded in the systems of our society and that is shortening the lives of marginalized populations across the nation and world
- And political battles centered on public health continue in America and beyond

The Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health (ASPPH) and those working in public health can rise to the occasion and do what we do best—strengthen and transform public health so we are able to swiftly respond to the myriad of evolving challenges we face. Together we are doing groundbreaking work that can – and does – save lives, and it's essential that our work reaches our audiences in language that hits home for them.

That is where communications—and the messaging that guides it—comes in. We must show the world what academic public health does so we can recruit and train the future workforce, secure investments from policymakers, partner with communities to address emerging needs, and continue the research to solve our most pressing challenges. Just like we need a united front in supporting public health, we need a united front in messaging what we do.

Those who challenge the premise of our work are certainly effective messengers. In fact, some might say that they are winning people's hearts and minds with their consistent denials of science and conscious strategies to defund research and public health interventions.

That's why we've developed these messages. They are designed to help ASPPH members and the academic public health field at large convey in the simplest, clearest language – which research has shown is the most impactful way to reach the general public, including policymakers – what we do and what we offer.

EXTERNAL CORE MESSAGING

Public Health & Academic Public Health

Public health protects and improves the health and quality of life for people and their communities. It is the backbone of community health, providing health education, disaster response, injury and disease prevention, environmental protections, and interventions for issues like infant and maternal mortality, climate change, and the spread of infectious diseases. Put simply, public health is all around us.

ASPPH's primary focus is promoting the impact of **academic public health**, which trains the next generation of public health professionals to be resilient, competent, compassionate, forward-thinking, and visionary in meeting future challenges. Academic public health also works hand-in-hand with its partners on the frontlines of public health – those who work in federal, state, and local health departments, as well as in other sectors impacting the social determinants of health, including private and corporate partners, civil organizations, and foundations.

At the same time, ASPPH encourages a lifelong learning approach to education for public health. This means inspiring educated, global citizens who can help create a healthier world, starting as early as the kindergarten years and lasting an entire lifespan.

Health care and public health are complementary and essential to achieving health and well-being for everyone. But they are not the same. Public health interventions address the root causes of health issues and promote overall community well-being, while health care involves treating individual illnesses or injuries **after** they occur.

This is what academic public health looks like:

- We work to identify the causes of gun violence and develop interventions to prevent injuries and deaths—such as requiring guns to be securely locked up.
- We create evidence-based programs to prevent premature births and ensure healthy babies.
- We collaborate with hospitals, OB-GYNs, nurse practitioners, midwives, and public health departments to redesign systems so no woman dies unnecessarily in childbirth.
- For people with HIV/AIDS, we focus on prevention efforts, such as promoting condom use and needle exchange programs to reduce transmission rates and educate communities about the virus.
- When rural hospitals are closing, we develop strategies, like telehealth, that can improve care and access in rural communities.
- We focus on the social determinants of health, such as education, poverty, and social isolation, by advocating for policies that improve access to the services people need.
- Mental health is public health. We work to improve access to mental health services for everyone, support recovery, and reduce stigma so people can get the help they need.
- Companies come to us when they want to improve occupational health and safety in their factories or farms. Or when they want to make their workforce healthier, they ask us for impactful recommendations.

- We support tobacco control policies, such as implementing higher taxes on cigarettes and restricting tobacco advertising to prevent smoking initiation and encourage cessation.
- We collaborate with public health agencies and other partners to develop preparedness plans and respond to emergencies such as natural disasters, infectious disease outbreaks, and bioterrorism events.

By looking at health holistically, we can prioritize prevention, save lives, and support economic development. What we do impacts the globe. **Everything we do is through a lens of diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice.**

There are five main tenets of academic public health:



1. **We train** the next generation of public health leaders, researchers, advocates, and practitioners who will improve and protect people's lives.



2. **We practice** public health by partnering with organizations and businesses at the local level to translate research into solutions for healthier communities. We work with and within the community to positively impact its health.



3. **We develop** the best possible evidence so policymakers can prioritize investments and policies that will achieve the best possible health outcomes for all populations and groups.



4. **We advocate** for public health priorities and share evidence-based research to combat misinformation. (Please see our [research agenda](#) and [advocacy priorities](#)).



5. **We illuminate and address** the structural inequities that create barriers to optimal health and well-being: racism, the burden of gun violence in Black and brown communities, environmental injustice, disproportionate morbidity, mortality, and discrimination.

This means ending the cultural, structural, and systemic conditions that enable discrimination in academic public health institutions. When—and only when—we do this can we truly prepare a 21st-century public health workforce that is equipped to protect and promote the health of all people. We know that diversity across health professions reduces health inequities and saves lives.

That is why we:

- Gather, analyze, and report demographic data, including gender identity and ethnicity of faculty, staff, and students.
- Offer leadership development opportunities to foster the advancement of people of color and other underrepresented populations across the professional academic lifespan.

Resources

- [ASPPH Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice Webpage](#)
- [Dismantling Racism and Structural Racism in Academic Public Health Framework](#)
- [SCOTUS Decision Statement](#)

Importance of Accreditation for Schools and Programs of Public Health

Accreditation is key to a strong public health system. When deciding to earn a public health degree, students should choose an accredited program.

The [Council on Education for Public Health](#) (CEPH) is an independent agency, recognized by the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) to accredit schools of public health and programs in public health, including those offered via distance education. Degrees include those offered at the baccalaureate, master's, and doctoral levels.

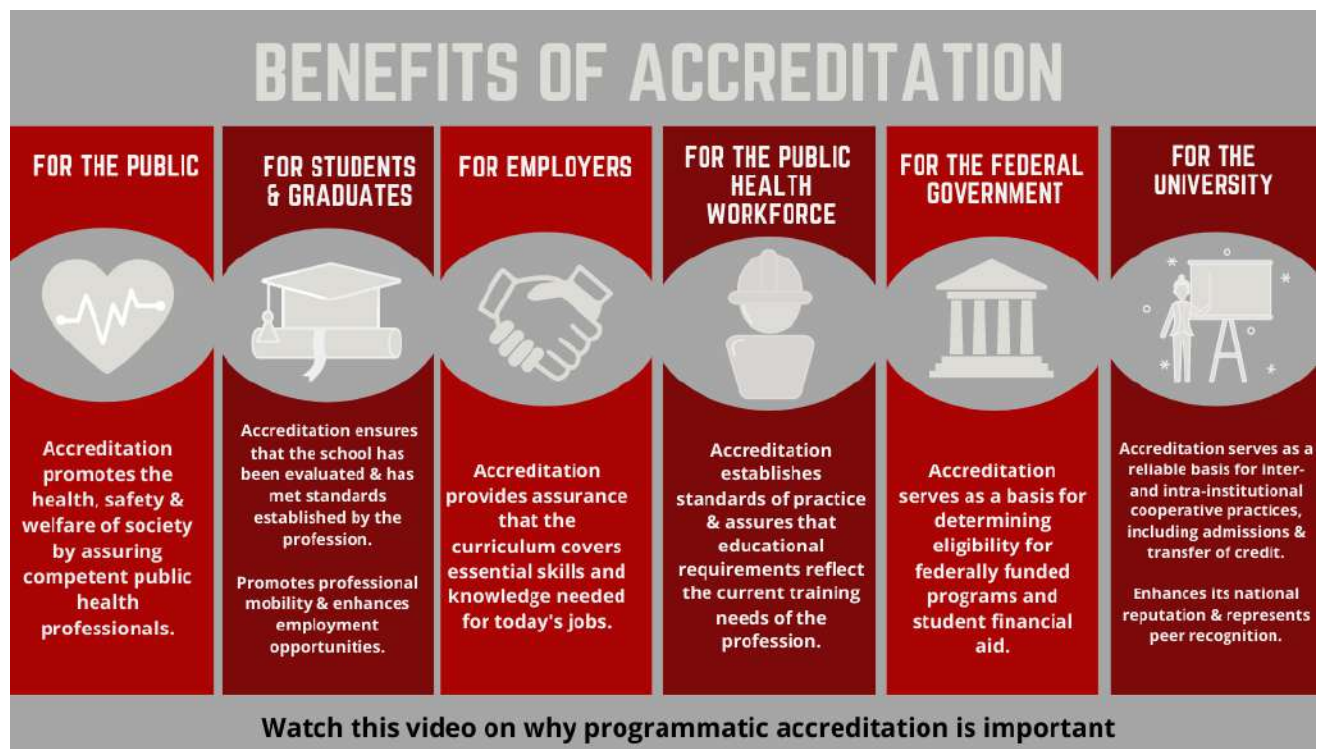


Every ASPPH school and program is accredited. Accreditation is not just a stamp of approval, but a signal to employers and other institutions that the school or program meets certain standards and benchmarks for educational quality, qualified faculty, and adequate resources.

When a student attends an accredited institution, they can be confident they are learning the skills they need in the workforce. They also can be assured that they are positioning themselves well for a long career in public health.

Graduating from an accredited program opens doors to certifications, funding opportunities, and employment. In fact, some employment opportunities, like working for the US Public Health Service, the US military, and some government agencies, are only open to students who have graduated from CEPH-accredited programs.

To ensure students are receiving the highest-quality training possible, they should only attend accredited schools or programs.



Source: Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH)

Resources

- [Council on Education for Public Health Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [ASPPH Accreditation Webpage](#)

Student Pathways: Opportunities a Public Health Degree Provides

There are countless ways to make a positive, lasting impact on the lives of people in your local community and around the world.

Some people think that getting a public health degree means you are working in a clinic or a local health department or on the ground vaccinating people or ensuring food and water are safe. Yes! Those are some of the important roles public health professionals play, but there are so many other roles too. Public health professionals:



Reduce health disparities



Collect and analyze data



Prevent and promote dental health



Explore the impact of genes on public health and disease prevention



Advance law and policy to protect the public's health



Improve maternal and child health outcomes



Study speech, languages, hearing disorders, and treatments



Promote healthy aging, longevity, and disability prevention

AND SO MUCH MORE! (Pick your favorite [example](#).)

Public Health Education & Education for Public Health

What is the difference between public health education and education for public health?

Public health education is one area of focus within public health. Health educators serve as an important part of the public health team and specialize in educating the public about health issues on a variety of topics and with diverse populations.

Education in public health is training future public health professionals to practice in one of many areas of public health, including: monitoring health trends, data analytics, advocating for healthy policies, developing health promotion programs, evaluating and managing outbreaks, establishing policy at all levels of government, and more.

When do I use each one?

Use “**public health education**” when discussing public health specialization in behavioral science, health promotion, and health education.

Use “**education in public health**” when talking about education and training in public health and use “education for public health” to express the learning that public health practitioners bring to bear in collaborating to improve health outcomes.

Accomplishments of Academic Public Health

Preventing and controlling disease

Public health research has led to the development of effective strategies for preventing and controlling diseases such as smallpox, measles, tuberculosis, West Nile, diabetes, and heart disease.

Creating vaccination programs

Academic public health has played a crucial role in the development and implementation of vaccination programs, leading to the eradication of diseases like smallpox and significant reductions in others, such as measles and rubella. Other vaccines, like those for flu, HPV, chickenpox, shingles, and more prevent death and disease and save the US millions of dollars every year.

Improving maternal and infant health outcomes

Improvements in technology and how newborns are screened for diseases have led to earlier lifesaving treatments and interventions. The promotion of fortifying foods with folic acid has also reduced neural tube defects in children.

Protecting the environment

Academic research has helped identify and address environmental factors that impact health, such as air and water pollution, hazardous waste disposal, and climate change mitigation.

Reducing tobacco use

Academic public health developed the evidence base used by policymakers at the federal, state, and local levels to advance interventions to reduce tobacco use, including comprehensive smoke-free policies and taxation.

Preventing cancer

Academic public health contributed to the screening recommendations to reduce mortality from colorectal cancer and female breast and cervical cancer.

Improving preparedness

In the wake of the 2001 terrorist attacks on American soil, more focus has been on improving the laboratory, epidemiology, surveillance, and response capabilities of public health. This was put to the test during the 2009 H1N1 Influenza outbreak and helped with the detection of the outbreak, deployment of tests and personal protective equipment, and the development and administration of a vaccine.

Resources

- [The Invisible Shield PBS Docu-Series](#)

Messaging Considerations for Skeptical Audiences

Not all audiences will be receptive to all messages regarding public health. It is important to understand your audience's values and beliefs and meet them where they are with the messages and examples you use. Building trust and finding common ground is key to fostering productive conversations about public health. Some messaging frames to consider when speaking with skeptical audiences:

Present evidence and data

Data-driven decision-making is at the heart of academic public health. Be sure to present the evidence and statistics that support the effectiveness of public health interventions, and if you can, share an example.

Focus on public-private partnerships

Public health partners with governmental agencies, universities, businesses, and community organizations to protect and promote the health of people in the community. This is a good time to also lift up the role of local communities as partners in addressing overall well-being.

Focus on economics

Public health interventions improve health outcomes and save money by preventing or reducing the burden of diseases, decreasing healthcare costs, and increasing economic productivity. Highlighting these benefits of a healthy population and the health care dollars saved with public health interventions resonates with some audiences.

In fact, according to a [2022 report](#) by the Center for American Progress (CAP), investing in public health can result in significant cost savings for individuals and society. The report states that "one study in California found that every \$1 invested in public health yields up to \$88 in improved health status and benefits to society." Investing in public health interventions is a wise decision for improving health outcomes and a smart financial decision for both individuals and society.

Discuss rural communities

Rural communities often rely on local public health systems to meet their unique health needs. These areas face specific challenges, such as limited access to healthcare facilities, higher rates of certain chronic diseases, and a shortage of healthcare professionals. Messaging to rural communities should emphasize the critical role of public health in addressing issues through services such as telehealth, mobile health clinics, community partnerships, and emergency preparedness plans. In many communities, schools and programs of public health work closely with their local departments of public health.

Acknowledge personal responsibility

Acknowledge the need for personal responsibility in maintaining health while emphasizing the need for systems and policies that allow people to make healthy choices. Consider highlighting how taking precautions and following public health recommendations align with individual freedom and responsibility.

Frame public health as a national security issue

Public health protects the US from threats like bioterrorism and pandemics because viewing health issues through a security lens can lead to better preparedness and resource allocation, enhancing the ability to respond to both natural outbreaks and deliberate attacks.

Use examples that will resonate

Examples related to disaster preparedness and response, workplace safety, governments working with private companies and local communities, innovations like telemedicine that promote efficiency, and chronic disease management (which leads to health care cost savings) will resonate with more skeptical audiences.

Resource

- [Empowering Policymakers to Invest in Public Health](#)
- [The Invisible Shield PBS Docu-Series](#)

ASPPH PRIORITIES

ASPPH works with our community of over 103,000 public health professionals and students to help address important public health issues and priorities. Our dedicated member schools and programs of public health play a vital role in advancing health in their communities, and they are united in the common goal of enhancing academic public health locally and globally. Below are some of the key public health priorities we are working on together—priorities we have invested in with our resources, our time, and our passion. These issues are some of the most important of our time and core to the future of public health.

Climate Change

In August 2021, ASPPH recognized climate change as a critical public health challenge and established the **Task Force for Climate Change and Health** to develop recommendations and collective action to reduce the impacts of climate change on population health. This work aligns with **ASPPH's Strategic Plan 2030** and our goal to advance solutions to the critical public health challenges facing society.



Core messages

- Climate change is one of the greatest global challenges of the 21st century.
- Every year our nation—and many others—experience floods, high temperatures, wildfires, and other extreme weather events that directly harm human, animal, and planetary health.
- Public health has a vital and unique role to play in both mitigating further climate change and helping communities adapt to unavoidable outcomes, particularly for those at greatest risk.
- Success will rely on advancing our understanding, building partnerships, securing funding, and

advocating for change.

- We recommend the following:
 - Training public health students so they are truly the nation's future experts in climate change and health preparedness
 - Researching adaptation strategies so we can learn how to live with the impacts of climate change such as rising temperatures and extreme weather events
 - Researching mitigation strategies to address some of the root causes of climate change
 - Centering community voices as we act on the best evidence available
 - Advocating for funding for a climate and health legislative agenda

What ASPPH is doing:

ASPPH's **Task Force on Climate Change and Health** brought together leaders across academic public health to develop "**Responding to the Climate Change and Health Crisis: A Framework for Academic Public Health.**" The framework includes a set of evidence-based principles and recommendations for collective action and collaboration with vested partners to reduce the impacts of climate change on population health.



The framework focuses on three themes:

- Environmental justice, social justice, and health equity
- Convening and collaborating across professions and disciplines
- Partnering for impact—partnering with communities; businesses; nonprofit organizations; and government agencies at local, national, regional, and global levels to achieve the greatest impact

The task force made recommendations for schools and programs of public health in the areas of education and training, research, policy and advocacy, and practice.

We need to train students to meet the demand from employers for expertise in climate change and health preparedness.

- This is no small feat. Right now, there is a mismatch between the training students are receiving and the competencies in demand for public health professionals to take on climate change.
- Schools of public health need to prioritize climate change by ensuring faculty are ready to instruct and that they have the funding and curriculum they need.

We need to continue our research into mitigation and adaptation strategies, health disparities resulting from climate change, the coordination and communication of data, and more.

- While funding has been limited to date, there seems to be a lot of momentum in this space. There is new funding by the NIH, commitments by the medical community, and urgency and

commitment by schools of public health to make this a timely moment to mobilize a national effort.

We need to support action to mitigate and adapt to climate change, and we do this best when we center community voices.

- Right now, we don't have all the answers, and as we wait for the science to guide our practices, we have to work with communities to take urgent action on environmental justice—acting on the best possible evidence.

We are advocating for funding and legislation to drive a climate change and health policy agenda.

- This includes supporting policies at all levels of government to reduce the health impacts of climate change, specifically for those most at risk (such as speeding the transition to clean energy and moving away from fossil fuels).
- And it includes a push for funding to continue to develop the science on best practices for public health practitioners to incorporate into their everyday work.

Resources

- Responding to the Climate Change and Health Crisis: A Framework for Academic Public Health [Executive Summary](#) and [Full Report](#).
- [ASPPH's 2023 Annual Report](#)

Disinformation and Misinformation

Note: Both *disinformation* and *misinformation* describe false or misleading claims, but disinformation is distributed with the intent to cause harm, whereas misinformation is the mistaken sharing of the same content.

Core messages

- Misinformation is not new – but the scale and speed at which it can travel has changed dramatically – mostly due to the internet and social media.
- COVID-19 added another layer of complexity—and we saw misinformation and disinformation weaponized against public health and science.
- It is important to understand how we got here. There are equity issues: Historical mistrust of medical institutions and health care interventions combined with deliberate targeting made Black and Latino communities more susceptible to misinformation.
- In public health, we often think of the social determinants of health as housing, education, food, transportation, jobs with fair wages, and more. But many also consider our information environment a social determinant of health. Just like our tap water, if the information environment is polluted, we cannot be healthy. There are underlying factors that can pollute an information environment such as political polarization, erosion of local news outlets, and

lack of access to broadband.

- And this unhealthy information environment leads to bad health—especially in communities that have been historically and intentionally underinvested in.

What academic public health must do:

Academic public health is now tasked with rebuilding trust in our institutions and in science. We must move beyond just debunking false information. We have to:

- Make sure everyone has access to quality health information—offline and online.
- Activate trusted messengers at the community level.
- Encourage public health professionals to engage in two-way conversations on social media.
- Some are calling for a community-based approach by working with “**infodemiologists**”—experts who understand the information flowing in communities and also the kind of information communities need. Their ultimate goal is to make communities resilient to misinformation.

Misinformation and disinformation examples during the COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic is a perfect—if frustrating—case study of how deliberate misinformation campaigns hampered public health efforts to protect people around the world. ASPPH’s **COVID-19 Storytelling Project** includes quotes and examples from public health officials working to address misinformation and disinformation.

Resources

- [ASPPH COVID Storytelling Project](#)
- [Empowering Policymakers to Invest in Public Health](#)
- [The Invisible Shield PBS Docu-Series](#)

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice (DEIJ)

ASPPH is committed to fostering an environment of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice (DEIJ) within academic public health. This commitment is integral to our mission of improving health outcomes for all communities, particularly those that have been historically marginalized.

Core messages

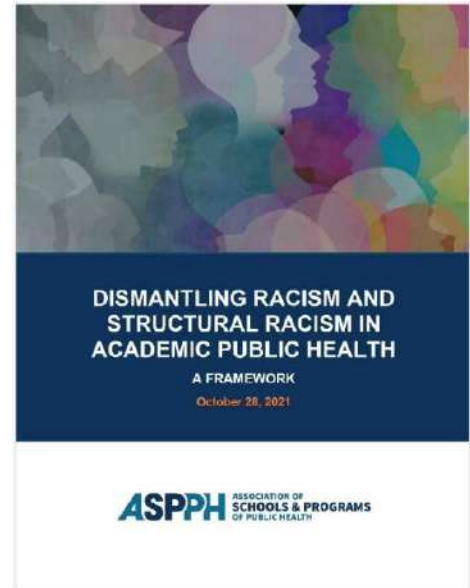
- We recognize and celebrate the unique backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences that each individual brings to the academic public health community. Our aim is to create a rich tapestry of diversity that enhances learning, research, and practice.
- We are dedicated to ensuring fairness and justice in all our endeavors. This means actively working to remove barriers to access and opportunities that have disproportionately affected certain groups. Equity goes beyond equality by recognizing that different people have different needs and providing the resources necessary to meet those needs.
- Our goal is to create an environment where everyone feels welcomed, valued, and

empowered to participate fully. This involves actively including those who have been traditionally excluded or marginalized.

- We strive to address the root causes of inequities within public health and broader society. This involves advocating for systemic changes that promote justice and fairness for all, particularly for those who have been oppressed or disenfranchised.

What ASPPH Is Doing

At ASPPH, the principles of DEIJ are embedded in everything we do—and have been for years. We are working with our members to implement curricula that emphasize the importance of DEIJ in public health, including historical contexts and contemporary challenges. We are also partnering with communities to understand their needs and co-develop solutions that promote health equity. We conduct research that highlights disparities in health outcomes and explores effective interventions to address these issues. We also work with policymakers to enact laws and policies that promote DEIJ principles in public health and beyond. Our goal is to cultivate a culture within ASPPH and our member institutions that prioritize DEIJ in all aspects of operations and interactions. ASPPH remains dedicated to advancing DEIJ in all our activities, ensuring that we are not only responding to current challenges but also proactively shaping a more just and equitable future for public health.



Resources:

- [Dismantling Racism and Structural Racism in Academic Public Health: A Framework](#)
- [Building Inclusive Excellence Through an Anti-racism Lens – A Framing the Future 2030 Expert Panel Report](#)
- [Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice ASPPH webpage](#)

Framing the Future 2030 (FTF 2030)

FTF 2030 is a visionary project aimed at preparing future public health professionals for a world of complex health challenges. This ambitious effort focuses on improving the entire enterprise of academic public health to make it more relevant, welcoming, and better connected to the real-world public health needs of all communities.



It represents a pivotal shift in learning and teaching public health and includes three expert panel

reports—**Building Inclusive Excellence through an Anti-racism Lens**, **Transformative Approaches to Teaching and Learning**, and **Fostering Community Partnerships for a Healthier World**. In each report, you will find the panels' key recommendations and guiding questions, strategies, and examples to aid in implementation.

Core messages

- Schools and programs of public health are at a pivotal moment.
- The world is changing rapidly, with new health threats, climate change, continued racial inequalities, and complex social determinants that often lead to disparities in health outcomes.
- New technologies like AI present untapped opportunities and challenges both to instructional methods and social justice values.
- We must prepare the next generation of public health professionals to meet the myriad of health challenges well into the 21st century.
- That is exactly what Framing the Future 2030 is working to do.

What ASPPH is doing: Framing the Future (FTF) 2030:

This ambitious call-to-action focuses on making academic public health more relevant, welcoming, and better connected to the real-world needs of all communities by:

- Creating and sustaining diverse and inclusive teaching and learning communities
- Transforming teaching and learning to prepare graduates who are clearly recognizable for their population and public health knowledge, skills, attitudes, and practices
- Fostering community partnerships (across disciplines, professions, and sectors) for a healthier world

The transformative nature of FTF 2030 is grounded in its pursuit of inclusivity, engagement, interdisciplinary collaboration, and a deep commitment to addressing the social determinants of health that perpetuate disparities. Framing the Future takes an anti-racist lens to its work. Exclusion, marginalization, and oppression – deeply embedded in historical legacies of colonization and white supremacy – are evident within educational institutions around the world.

We want to prepare graduates who are not only knowledgeable but also adaptable and empathetic to the diverse needs of the communities they will serve. This sounds simple but is very complex. We do this by:

- Encouraging the creation of learning environments where students can engage



- with different viewpoints
- Elevating civic engagement
- Promoting active and experiential learning
- Strengthening ties with community partners

Put simply, this is a call to action for a transformative shift in teaching public health. It relies on the courage, commitment, and accountability of university leaders and community partners to implement and adopt the recommendations in the months and years ahead.

We will know if we are successful if we have competent graduates, of course – but also if we can improve the health and well-being of the communities they serve.

Resources

- [Framing the Future Executive Summary](#)
- [Education for Public Health 2030: Transformation to Meet Health Needs in a Changing World](#)

Global Action

ASPPH's commitment to **global action** is rooted in the belief that health knows no boundaries and that addressing global health issues requires a unified effort. We strive to foster international partnerships, advocate for evidence-based policies, and empower public health professionals worldwide to confront complex health challenges.

Core messages

- Health doesn't stop at the border. A health crisis anywhere can become a health crisis everywhere—very quickly, as COVID-19 demonstrated.
- We recognize the interconnectedness of health challenges across borders and the critical need for global collaboration on issues that include:
 - tackling infectious diseases
 - promoting maternal and child health
 - addressing climate change
 - advancing health equity and many more
- Our health is intertwined—what happens in one country affects another country.
- Health knows no boundaries, and addressing global health issues requires a unified effort.

What ASPPH is doing:

ASPPH has a long history of working with schools and programs of public health outside of the US, advising on issues of public health education and accreditation, and encouraging mutual learning experiences that benefit leaders, faculty, staff, and students locally and globally.

Additionally, our international members provide leadership and experiences that increase the excellence and diversity of our organization.

Specifically, we have been active on a wide variety of issues, such as:

- Participating in a global survey about vaccine sentiment among public health and health care workers to analyze if, and how, the COVID-19 pandemic impacted views on vaccinations
- Working with the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) to help strengthen the public health workforce in the Americas
- Providing thought leadership on issues related to global academic public health
- Working with the World Health Organization (WHO) on their workforce roadmap, specifically the action area on competency-based education

We bring together global academic public health leaders to share information and experiences and discuss collaborations in forums such as the [ASPPH Annual Meeting for Academic Public Health](#).

ASPPH is also a founding member of and serves as the Secretariat for the [Global Network for Academic Public Health](#) (GNAPH), an alliance of seven regional associations that represent schools and programs of public health worldwide focused on mutual learning and collaboration among more than 450 academic public health institutions in 100 countries across six continents. We are all working together to improve the health of people and the planet.

Resources

- [ASPPH 2023 Annual Report](#)
- [Global Network for Academic Public Health Website](#)
- [The Invisible Shield PBS Docu-Series](#)

Governmental Public Health Workforce

Public health professionals are leaving their positions at state and local health departments and other governmental agencies at an astonishing rate. Our nation's health depends on having public health experts in these roles. ASPPH has created a [Center for Public Health Workforce Development](#), which focuses on growing a diverse public health workforce for the future.



Core messages

- Over the last decade, this country (and the world) has experienced transformational change:
 - COVID-19 resulted in high levels of morbidity and mortality
 - The climate of our planet is in upheaval
 - Gun violence continues to kill 100 people every single day
 - Old viruses are becoming new again
 - And political battles continue in America and beyond

- All of this has impacted our workforce.
- A **recent study** found that if trends continue, by 2025, as much as half of the governmental public health workforce will have left their positions.
- **If we are committed to public health, we must be committed to the workforce.**
- This means promoting our field, growing a diverse workforce, and working with policymakers to truly invest in the public health workforce through fair pay and student debt relief.
- By strengthening the public health workforce, we are protecting and promoting the health of all people in all populations.

What ASPPH is doing:

ASPPH has launched the **Center for Public Health Workforce Development**, which focuses on growing a diverse public health workforce for the future. This is what the center does:

- **Collects and Analyzes Data to Monitor Trends and Forecast Needs:** Data gives us insight as to what we need for the future. When we understand curriculum, competencies, and workforce numbers in terms of faculty, students, and practitioners we can make decisions about what is needed for the future.
- **Identifies and Develops Solutions to Meet the Training Needs of the Workforce:** The public health workforce needs to continue to evolve to meet the myriad of health challenges of the 21st century. The center identifies the skills and competencies to train the workforce to be able to do just that.
- **Mentors and Trains the Workforce:** Growing and supporting a diverse workforce is critical to the future of public health. The center supports fellowship opportunities that focus on promoting health equity, protecting the health of underrepresented populations, and eliminating health disparities. Fellows are assigned to federal agencies, governmental public health agencies, or other practice-based organizations to apply knowledge and training, further develop their skills, and make an impact in the workforce.
- **Partners and Collaborates:** Public health is stronger when we all work together. The center partners with public health practice organizations, including but not limited to, the World Health Organization (WHO), the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO), the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO), the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB), and the National Board of Public Health Examiners (NBPHE), to establish and deliver life-long learning strategies to public health professionals.
- **Advocates:** The center advocates for federal investments in public health workforce development, including efforts to diversify the workforce and reduce student debt to enable more people to work in public health at all levels.

Resources

- [Statement on Workforce Exodus](#)
- [Federal Student Loan Debt in Public Health and the Opportunities for Loan Repayment Programs Study](#)

Gun Violence Prevention

Gun violence is a public health crisis that continues to devastate individuals, families, and communities. ASPPH made a renewed commitment to work to end it by establishing a **Gun Violence Prevention Task Force** and creating a framework to guide academic public health institutions to inform their actions related to gun violence prevention.



In the summer of 2022, in response to continued American mass shootings, ASPPH recognized the urgency of gun violence and established a task force, which included expert representatives from 13 of our members. The task force spent 2022 reviewing existing literature, identifying needs and gaps, and developing recommendations informed by evidence that can be used by our members and other schools and programs of public health to enhance impact across the broader stakeholder community.

Core messages

- Everyone should be able to live a long, healthy life—a life without violence. Yet **more than 100 lives are cut short due to firearm violence every day** in America, disproportionately affecting Indigenous communities and people of color.
- Firearms are the leading cause of death in youth in the US.
- Suicides represent more than half of all firearm-related deaths in the US.
- Gun violence touches every community and leaves devastating, long-lasting ripple effects for both victims and families that can last a lifetime – from physical and psychological damage to challenges in school, to economic costs at home.
- There is no question that gun violence is a public health emergency—contributing to premature death, injury, and disability.
- As gun violence continues to devastate families and communities across the nation, we need more action and urgency from our leaders.
- We support a public health solution that focuses on prevention and aims to mitigate harm.

What ASPPH is doing:

The academic public health community is in a unique position to elevate the visibility of gun violence to a national health crisis and in turn, catalyze collective action through a shared evidence-based public health approach.

The ASPPH **Gun Violence Prevention Task Force** released a framework in 2023 focused on these themes:

- Emphasizing a public health perspective in the national conversation
- Elevating strategies that are rooted in empirical evidence



- Investing in the next generation of public health professionals for long-term change

The task force made recommendations for ASPPH, as well as its schools and programs of public health, to implement in the areas of education and training, research, policy and advocacy, and practice. In addition, ASPPH has been working with the new [White House Office of Gun Violence Prevention](#) on a "how-to" guide for members.

We need to educate and train our future public health professionals in gun violence prevention.

- Education and training begins with the development of a gun violence curriculum grounded in health equity, diversity, and the social determinants of health.
- ASPPH can support our members in developing the curriculum from undergraduate through doctorate programs.

We need to supercharge our research.

The federal ban on research has been lifted, allowing universities to prioritize gun violence prevention research and train the next generation of researchers at the same time, but funding challenges will remain as long as this issue is so politically divisive.

- University research offices can consider gun violence research for seed money—which they can leverage to raise other federal and external dollars.
- ASPPH can facilitate collaboration across universities on joint research opportunities to maximize the dollars.

We need to take advantage of the political momentum and continue to advocate for gun violence prevention policies and funding—with government and private donors.

- Gun violence prevention should not be a partisan issue. We recently saw the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act become law. And schools and programs of public health are well-positioned to advocate in every state across the country for common-sense, evidence-based policies. The approach will vary depending on which state a school or program is in.

We need to work hand-in-hand with communities most affected by gun violence.

- Community members are experts on what is happening in their own backyards and schools of public health can listen and work with them and local organizations to catalyze action on gun violence prevention.
- ASPPH can advocate for funding to support such partnerships and can create guidelines around community engagement.

Resources

- [ASPPH Statement on the Release of Gun Violence Prevention: An Academic Public Health Framework](#)
- [Gun Violence Prevention: An Academic Public Health Framework](#)
- [Gun Violence Section of ASPPH's 2023 Annual Report](#)
- [ASPPH's Gun Violence Prevention Webpage](#)

CONCLUSION

ASPPH stands at the forefront of a rapidly changing world, ready to tackle the myriad of public health challenges with resilience, innovation, and a deep commitment to social justice. Through comprehensive education, cutting-edge research, and active advocacy, ASPPH is shaping a future where public health professionals are equipped to protect and enhance the health and well-being of communities across the globe. By emphasizing diversity, equity, inclusion, and the dismantling of systemic racism, we are helping to ensure that the public health workforce reflects the populations it serves, ultimately leading to health equity and improved outcomes for all.

The journey ahead is complex, but with a unified effort in messaging, collaboration, and action, ASPPH and its members are poised to create a healthier world for generations to come. Together, we can overcome the challenges of our time, from pandemic response and climate change to gun violence and misinformation, ensuring that public health remains a beacon of hope and a force for positive change in an ever-evolving global landscape.

And although academic public health has made incredible strides, we must be prepared to face current and future challenges to our field. Whether you are talking to the public, your academic community, politicians, or the press, having clear, consistent, and effective messages in your back pocket is essential. Pairing these messages with stories helps bring the work to life even more effectively.

This messaging guide gives members of the academic public health community the tools they need to discuss our work and address difficult questions. As public health threats grow and budgets are threatened, we urge you to use this guide to demonstrate the impact of academic public health in your own communities and across the globe.