

BEHAVIORAL AND COMMUNITY HEALTH (BCHL)

Graduate Degree Program
College: Public Health

Abstract

The Department offers graduate study leading to the Master Public Health (MPH) in Behavioral and Community Health and the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Behavioral and Community Health. The graduate programs are designed to prepare behavioral and community professionals with specific skills and the ability to implement theoretical knowledge in a practical setting.

The goal of the doctoral program is to develop health professionals competent in understanding the health needs of populations who are qualified to conduct research in order to implement programs and policies aimed at improving the public's health. This program is very selective and admission is competitive. The program provides students with the opportunity to develop research skills essential in making significant contributions to the scientific and professional literature in behavioral and community health.

Degree programs may be completed either full-time or part-time, although full-time is preferred. Faculty support coursework, research and practice experiences in many areas, including: health communication; health behavior; adolescent health; women's health; health literacy and health disparities. Faculty hold doctoral degrees in public health, psychology, health education, sociology and epidemiology. The Department offers excellent research and laboratory facilities including the Center for Young Adult Health and Development and the Prevention Research Center.

Doctoral students develop skills to inform, deliver, and evaluate interventions, programs and policies to improve the public's health and eliminate health disparities. Specifically, students conduct theory-based, community-engaged, and anti-racist quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods research, while receiving exceptional mentoring. The program culminates in a dissertation.

Financial Assistance

The Department offers a limited number of fellowships and graduate teaching and research assistantships. Please contact the Director of Graduate Studies for further information.

Contact

Katherine Sharp, PhD, MPH

Clinical Professor

Director of Graduate Studies

Department of Behavioral and Community Health

1234V School of Public Health Building

4200 Valley Drive

University of Maryland

College Park, MD 20742

Telephone: 301.405.2464

Fax: 301.314.9167

Email: ksharp1@umd.edu

Website: sph.umd.edu/bch (<http://www.sph.umd.edu/bch/>)

Courses: HLTH (<https://academiccatalog.umd.edu/graduate/courses/hlth/>) SPHL (<https://academiccatalog.umd.edu/graduate/courses/sphl/>)

Relationships: Epidemiology (EPDM) (<https://academiccatalog.umd.edu/graduate/programs/epidemiology-epdm/>), Health Administration (HLSA) (<https://academiccatalog.umd.edu/graduate/programs/health-administration-hlsa/>), Maternal and Child Health (MCHS) (<https://academiccatalog.umd.edu/graduate/programs/maternal-child-health-mchs/>)

ADMISSIONS

The Ph.D. in Behavioral and Community Health program has a two-part application process. Applicants must submit the SOPHAS application (sophas.cas.myliaison.com (<http://sophas.cas.myliaison.com>)), the centralized application service for schools and programs of public health, and the UMD Supplemental application (<https://terpengage.umd.edu/community/CustomLoginPage/?GradApp=True>). Both applications must be submitted, complete with all required documents and verified by the scheduled deadline (<https://sph.umd.edu/admissions/graduate-admissions/graduate-application-process/>). Applications will be reviewed when both the SOPHAS and the UMD Supplemental applications are completed and verified.

GENERAL ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

- A Bachelor's degree
- Minimum 3.0 undergraduate GPA
- Transcripts from all previous coursework
- English proficiency test score (TOEFL, IELTS or PTE) (international applicants (<https://gradschool.umd.edu/admissions/english-language-proficiency-requirements/>))
- Statement of purpose and objectives, including career and educational goals, professional experience, research areas of interest, how our PhD program fits your goals, and the faculty you are interested in working with.
- Response to personal experiences question(s)

PROGRAM SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS

- SOPHAS Application (<https://academiccatalog.umd.edu/graduate/programs/behavioral-community-health-bchl/www.sophas.org>) & UMD Supplemental Application (<https://gradschool.umd.edu/admissions/application-process/step-step-guide-applying/>)
- A master's degree in public health or a related field is preferred but not required
- 6 credits of social science (e.g., sociology, psychology, anthropology) coursework at the undergraduate or graduate level
- Three letters of recommendation
- Resume or curriculum vitae
- A writing sample is required. Please submit ONE of the following: published manuscript, undergraduate or graduate thesis/capstone project, research paper/report for a class or employer/client. If you submit a published manuscript and you are not the first author, describe the contributions you made to the publication
- Fit between the applicant's goals, expectations, and research interests and the program competencies and faculty expertise
- Official GRE Test Score submission is **not required**. GRE scores won't be reviewed

- Applicants being considered for the program will be invited for an interview

Note for applicants with foreign credentials:

- The SOPHAS application requires that applicants submit a WES credential evaluation (https://help.liaisonedu.com/SOPHAS_Applicant_Help_Center/Sending_Your_Official_Transcripts_and_Test_Scores_to_SOPHAS/Sending_Official_Transcripts_to_SOPHAS/2_Foreign_and_French-Canadian_Transcripts/)
- The UMD supplemental application requires the upload of unofficial transcripts issued in the original language along with a literal English translation. Visit the Graduate School website for additional information (<https://gradschool.umd.edu/admissions/international-admissions/>)
- Evidence of English Language proficiency is required if the applicant does not hold a degree from a U.S. institution or from one of the English-speaking countries listed on the Graduate School website (<https://gradschool.umd.edu/admissions/english-language-proficiency-requirements/>). Language scores must be submitted to the SOPHAS and the UMD supplemental application

For detailed instructions on how to apply, please visit the School of Public Health Website: sph.umd.edu/graduate-application-process (<https://sph.umd.edu/graduate-application-process/>)

APPLICATION DEADLINES

Type of Applicant	Fall Deadline
Domestic Applicants	
US Citizens and Permanent Residents	January 8, 2027
	The priority deadline for both the SOPHAS and the UMD applications is November 13, 2026.
International Applicants	
F (student) or J (exchange visitor) visas; A,E,G,H,I and L visas and immigrants	January 8, 2027
	The priority deadline for both the SOPHAS and the UMD applications is November 13, 2026.

RESOURCES AND LINKS:

Department Website: www.sph.umd.edu/bch/ (<http://www.sph.umd.edu/bch/>)

Program Website: sph.umd.edu/academics/doctoral-degrees/phd-behavioral-and-community-health/ (<https://sph.umd.edu/academics/doctoral-degrees/phd-behavioral-and-community-health/>)

Application Process: [sph.umd.edu/graduate-application-process](https://sph.umd.edu/admissions/graduate-admissions/graduate-application-process/) (<https://sph.umd.edu/admissions/graduate-admissions/graduate-application-process/>)

Admissions FAQ: [sph.umd.edu/graduate-application-faqs](https://sph.umd.edu/admissions/graduate-admissions/graduate-application-faqs/) (<https://sph.umd.edu/admissions/graduate-admissions/graduate-application-faqs/>)

REQUIREMENTS

- Behavioral and Community Health, Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) (<https://academiccatalog.umd.edu/graduate/programs/behavioral-community-health-bchl/behavioral-community-health-phd/>)

FACILITIES AND SPECIAL RESOURCES

The Department has research specializations in a variety of areas including:

- Minority health/social inequalities in health
- Alcohol and drug abuse
- Safety and health
- Sexual health
- Adolescent health and risk behavior
- Violence prevention/community violence
- Public health communication
- Health literacy

Specialized laboratories operating within the Department include:

- The Center for Young Adult Health and Development
- The Prevention Research Center
- CommunityTHRIVES Lab
- Community Health Awareness Messages and Prevention (CHAMP) under specialized labs

The proximity of the nation's capital, the National Institutes of Health, the National Library of Medicine, and Food and Drug Administration, the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, and numerous public health focused private and not-for-profit organizations/agencies render the University of Maryland unusually well suited for graduate work in behavioral and community health.