

Public health nurses (PHNs) are registered nurses whose work and focus is on community health and wellbeing.

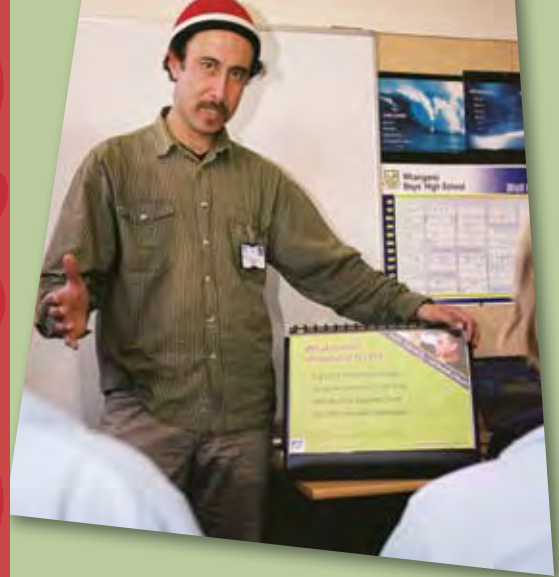
PHNs do health assessments and disease prevention activities in schools and community settings. Most have very broad responsibilities and are involved in a great variety of work. Some specialise in particular issues such as refugee health, housing issues, child protection and communicable disease control.

PHNs play a key co-ordination role between families/whānau, communities, and health (and other) organisations and agencies. They are also among the first people to gauge any major health and social trends in the community as they see these trends impacting on their clients.

ACTIVITIES PUBLIC HEALTH NURSES MIGHT DO:

- work with teachers to promote health programmes in schools
- work with others to develop one-stop-shop health services, for example, a one-stop-shop for youth health
- play a major part in implementing an immunisation programme
- advocate for healthy home environments with families/whānau and communities
- work with a primary healthcare organisation (PHO).

Public Health Nurse



What school subjects do you need?

English and science subjects such as biology, chemistry or physics are important to get into the Bachelor of Nursing degree.

What qualifications will you need?

A three year Bachelor of Nursing degree is the basic requirement followed by a current practicing certificate, which needs to be renewed each year. Many public health nurses complete further qualifications such as a postgraduate course in public health.

Who employs public health nurses?

Almost all public health nurses are employed by district health boards. Some work in public health units and others in departments such as Child Health, or Family Health. Most PHNs are very mobile, moving around their community every day, touching base with a wide number of organisations and people. They are key players in ensuring the health and wellbeing of communities.

CAREER 3:

PUBLIC HEALTH NURSE COREY, Northland Health

COREY PIA'S (NGATI HINE) PUBLIC HEALTH NURSING HAS A YOUTH FOCUS working mostly with children from pre-schoolers to 18-year olds. He is based at The Pulse – a one-stop youth health centre where he has access to a number of participating agencies including Child, Youth and Family Service, community health workers, a school for pregnant mums, a GP clinic and a community constable.

Programmes he is involved with include child immunisations (within a school-based programme), dental hygiene in kohanga reo and kindergartens, sexual health education for high school students, monthly injections for those with rheumatic fever, vision and hearing testing, well child checks and his weekly health clinics at Whangarei Boys High School.

Corey loves working in the community and says it's incredibly rewarding watching kids develop from primary school children into wonderful young adults. There are times when you have to be tough but mostly you have to build trusting relationships so that people know they can rely on you.

He feels that as a male Māori public health nurse he is able to make a particular difference through his work at the high school where he can mentor boys and provide neutral, caring advice – especially around sexual health issues. He says being bilingual is a real asset for his work.

Corey works with other stakeholders including local iwi health providers, the Asthma Society, the Cancer Society and primary health organisations. His dental hygiene education in local kohanga has been well supported by a manufacturer who supplied free toothbrushes and toothpaste for the children in the education sessions.

Corey has a Bachelor of Applied Science and a Diploma in Nursing. He was working at Bay of Islands hospital when a friend encouraged him to follow a public health nursing career and Corey says he's never looked back.

“It's important to keep up-to-date with training – that's what I really like. We are encouraged to do that all the time. I've just finished BCQ training (for Tuberculosis (TB)). I'm really committed to making a difference with TB in the North”

