



**Idaho State
University**

**Community and
Public Health**

Graduate Certificate in Rural Health: Student Handbook



Department of Community and Public Health

College of Health

Kasiska Division of Health Sciences



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WELCOME FROM THE COORDINATOR

Welcome to the fully online Graduate Certificate in Rural Health program in the Department of Community and Public Health at ISU!

This certificate is a solution-oriented program designed for those who are passionate about health and well-being in rural communities!

This handbook has important information that will help you complete the certificate in a timely manner. It walks you through deadlines and introduces you to core course requirements and electives. Please speak with your advisor face-to-face (in-person or on Zoom) once per semester to ensure you are staying on track and getting what you want out of the program.



A graduate certificate in rural health is an excellent companion to degrees in primary care, allied health and public health. We have participants from a variety of disciplines, including physician assistants, public health, anthropology, and communication sciences.

I can't express the value of this program any better than one of our participants:

Since beginning my journey in medicine, I have always planned to practice in a rural setting. The Rural Health Certificate has provided me the tools to do more than "practice medicine". I can now see beyond traditional medical needs, understand how a community compares to its surroundings, and plan meaningful change to improve health access and quality in rural and underserved communities (Tyson Frantz, graduated 2024-2025).

Please stay in touch after graduation, via [LinkedIn](#), the [DCPH Facebook and Instagram](#) accounts, email, and our symposiums, and in the meantime, contact us immediately if you have questions or concerns.

We are here to ensure your success!

Diana Schow, PhD

ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY

Founded in 1901, Idaho State University is one of the most comprehensive higher education institutions in the country. Idaho State is one of six universities in the US offering programs from technical certificates through graduate and professional degrees. The Carnegie-classified doctoral research institution attracts students from around the world to its main campus in Pocatello and locations in Meridian, Idaho Falls, and Twin Falls. Since 1966, the University has been Idaho's designated leader for training and educating health care professionals.

<u>ISU Mission</u>	We engage students through learning and research opportunities that improve the intellectual vigor, cultural vitality, and health of our communities.
<u>ISU Vision</u>	We inspire a passion for knowledge and discovery.
<u>ISU Values</u>	Integrity - Honesty in our actions and words
	Community - Fostering connections
	Inclusivity - Valuing all and building a culture of belonging
	Teamwork - Collaborating with compassion and respect
	Shared Responsibility - All contributing to our success
	Learning - Continuous growth and development

Idaho State University's Land Acknowledgment Statement

Acknowledging Native lands is an important way to honor and respect Indigenous peoples and their traditional territories. The land on which Idaho State University's Pocatello campus sits is within the original Fort Hall Reservation boundaries and is the traditional and ancestral home of the Shoshone and Bannock peoples. We acknowledge the Fort Hall Shoshone and Bannock peoples, their elders past and present, their future generations, and all Indigenous peoples, including those upon whose land the University is located. We offer gratitude for the land itself and the original caretakers of it.

As a public research university, it is our ongoing commitment and responsibility to teach accurate histories of the regional Indigenous people and of our institutional relationship with them. It is our commitment to the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes and to ISU's citizens that we will collaborate on future educational discourse and activities in our communities.

THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AND PUBLIC HEALTH

About the Department of Community and Public Health

Our graduates work at the frontlines of emerging health issues, and strategically guide organizations and communities through evidence-based decision-making and cultural humility. Each of our programs prepares students in areas that have projected job growth. Many organizations and communities increasingly recognize the need for better programs, healthcare, and environments that foster healthy people and communities.

Our degree programs include master's degrees in Health Education and in Public Health. In addition, we offer an undergraduate degree in Community and Public Health with emphasis areas in Community/Worksite Wellness, Addiction Studies, and School Health, and an undergraduate degree in Health Sciences.

Our academic certificate offerings include graduate certificates in Public Health, Rural Health, Addiction Studies, Interprofessional Geriatrics, and Mindfulness, an undergraduate Community Health Worker certificate, and an undergraduate Addiction Studies certificate. These certificates require fewer credits than full degrees and can be completed in-person or online depending on the offering.

Department of Community and Public Health Mission

We advance health for all through collaborative learning and scholarly activities, enabling students and communities to thrive.

MPH FACULTY

RURAL HEALTH CERTIFICATE COURSES ARE NORMALLY TAUGHT BY MPH FACULTY

Ryan Lindsay (Associate Professor)

Meridian: 1311 E. Central Dr., Meridian, ID 83642 Office 669 | ryanlindsay@isu.edu

Courses typically taught: MPH 5507, MPH 6640, MPH 6601

Dr. Lindsay is interested in global health and how substance use, including smoking, influences HIV and tuberculosis. His research has highlighted the plight of people living with HIV/AIDS and/or addiction, people experiencing homelessness or disability, immigrants, and sex worker populations. He has worked in Community Health Worker workforce development programming in Idaho since 2016.



Diana Schow (Associate Professor and Coordinator for the Graduate Certificate in Rural Health)

Pocatello: Reed Gym, #243B | dianaschow@isu.edu

Courses typically taught: MPH 5503, 5511, 6660, 6609, 6606

Dr. Schow completes mixed-methods action research projects to improve health status, social justice and wellness of individuals, communities and organizations in rural and underserved areas. Her work has involved direct services, program administration, research and volunteerism. Populations of focus in southeast Idaho and Montana have included victims of child abuse, victims of domestic violence and sexual assault, Hispanic agricultural workers, Native American populations, persons in poverty and individuals receiving and applying for disability, food stamps, Medicaid and emergency assistance. Her international experience includes working with rural programs in Peru and 13 European countries



Kristin Van De Griend (Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Community and Public Health)

Pocatello: Reed Gym, #242 | kristinvandegrien@isu.edu

Courses typically taught: MPH 6660, MPH 6640

Dr. Van De Griend engages in public health research and practice with the intent to promote health equity. Whenever possible, she employs community-based, mixed methods research. Her work is grounded within social justice and intersectionality frameworks and she prioritizes transdisciplinary teamwork. Most of her global and local research has focused on maternal and child health, violence prevention, water insecurity, and community development. Dr. Van De Griend is especially interested in translating research to practice and policy through implementation science.



STATISTICAL CONSULTANT

Irene van Woerden (Associate Professor, MPH Director, Statistical Consultant for the Graduate Certificate in Rural Health)

Pocatello: Reed Gym, #242 | irenevanwoerden@isu.edu

Courses typically taught: MPH 6602 and MPH 5599

Dr. van Woerden's main research interests are health behaviors and outcomes, with a focus on social networks, food insecurity, and body size. Dr. van Woerden also examines environmental issues, such as bisphenols, phthalates, and nuclear energy.



PROGRAM INFORMATION

*The Graduate Certificate in Rural Health is a **fully online**, solution-oriented program designed for people who are passionate about health and well-being in rural communities!*

The Graduate Certificate in Rural Health focuses intently on the least populated areas of the western United States, including communities in Alaska, Wyoming, Idaho, South Dakota, Nevada, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, and Montana.

This 15-credit program is designed for graduate students and health professionals (primary care, allied health and public health) who currently practice, or intend to practice, in rural settings.

The certificate's curriculum includes courses that: 1) address the public health issues in rural communities, 2) introduce students to rural health systems, and 3) give students a hands-on opportunity to partner with rural health organizations. It also offers a wide variety of electives to help students tailor their experiences to individual needs and interests. It provides a foundational rural perspective that is not normally obtainable in primary care, allied health or public health training programs.

All coursework introduces students to timely, evidence-based information that is critical to better serving rural communities. Some of the **many** course topics include:

- Disease and Illness Burdens in Rural Communities
- Hispanic and Indigenous People's Health
- Agricultural Safety and Health
- Health for Rural Industry Workers (Logging, Fishing)
- Mental Health in Small Communities
- Risky and Health Promoting Rural (Rodeo/Wilderness Expeditions)
- Informal Communications Networks
- Understanding Indian Health Services

The most interesting thing about the Rural West course is that it provides a very focused view of health issues in a well-defined geographical region along with a simultaneously broader insight into challenges that rural populations are facing throughout the country.

As someone not born and raised in this country, the course helped me a lot, to understand the people and public health in the United States in general and the Mountain West in particular. If one wants to practice primary care or public health, especially in the health systems domain, this course provides a very powerful insight into the people, the health system, and disparities along with an introduction to a variety of plausible community-based interventions (Aysha Zahidie, graduated MPH 2024).

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Participants complete three core courses that enhance their skill-set and provide hands-on learning opportunities:

1. Health Topics: The Rural West (3 credits)
2. Rural Health Systems (3 credits)
3. Partnering for Rural Health (3 credits)

In addition, participants can choose from a wide variety of electives (6 credits) to complete their certificate.

Many students are able to share credits that they are already taking in other programs as electives.



This is the case for students in the Physician Assistants, Rural Health Track program at Idaho State University. These students are allowed to count their rural immersive experiences and some of their required coursework as electives, which makes it significantly faster to finish the program. It is also the case for students in the MPH program.

Students pursuing the Graduate Certificate in Rural Health must complete a minimum of 15 credits of coursework with a GPA of 3.0 or better. Students in the MPH program are required to take Rural Health Systems (MPH5507) as part of their MPH. This also counts towards the Rural Health Certificate. In addition, students can often count some of the MPH classes (e.g., independent study, internship) towards the certificate elective requirement – **up to a maximum of 9 credits shared between the Rural Health Certificate and MPH program.**

Program Delivery

Courses are offered **online – some synchronously and some asynchronously**. This program is designed to meet the needs of working individuals as well as those in rural areas. Please refer to the class schedule and speak with your advisor about these options.

Faculty Availability

All full-time faculty maintain regular office hours and are available to assist and advise students. Appointments may be requested outside of regular office hours. Students are strongly encouraged to meet regularly with their advisor. If a faculty member is not being responsive, reach out to the Program Coordinator, and if that does not resolve the issue, reach out to the Department Chair.

Advising

You will be assigned an academic advisor to guide you in selecting courses that satisfy program requirements and providing the foundation for your professional goals. Your advisor can help you by: providing information about research and service opportunities, communicating about program requirements, ensuring program approval, helping you understand graduation procedures, and offering more general guidance and support.

Students may request a different academic advisor by contacting the Rural Health Certificate Program Director. Once the request has been approved, the student will notify the prior advisor.

Students are expected to meet with their academic advisor prior to registering for their first semester of coursework. Your academic advisor is the best person to reach out to if you have questions about course selection and progress.

GPA Requirements and Dismissal from the Program

As per the [MPH Graduate Catalog](#), all students must maintain a satisfactory record of scholarship. A 3.0 grade point average (GPA) or better is required for any graduate degree or certification at Idaho State University. Students who earn a grade below a B- in a core course will be required to retake that course. Students who earn grades below a B- in two courses may be dismissed from the program. Students must also conduct themselves in an ethical and professional manner.

ISU Graduate School Academic Policies and General Information

For information about: Dates, Deadlines, and Procedures; Course Levels, Credits and Grading; Transfer of Credits; Petition; Drop or Withdrawal; Appeals and Dismissals; Academic Dishonesty; Other Policies, please read the [ISU Graduate Academic Catalog](#).

Transfer Credits and Course Substitutions

Please refer to the [graduate catalog](#) for more information about transfer credits and substitutions. These are handled on a case-by-case basis.

Students who complete and are awarded the Graduate Certificate in Rural Health may share up to 9 credits from the certificate program into their MPH program. Admission and completion of the certificate does not guarantee admission into the MPH program. Courses completed in the certificate program must have a grade of B- or above to transfer into the MPH program.

GRADUATE CERTIFICATE COURSES

CORE COURSES:

MPH 5503 Health Topics: The Rural West: 3 semester hours

Survey a variety of health topics specific to rural communities in the West. Critically examine social, cultural, economic and political factors that shape the way health is addressed and explained. Develop a personalized career plan that addresses key take-aways from the course.

MPH 5507 Rural Health Systems: 3 semester hours

Explore the wide variety of public health and healthcare delivery models currently operating in the rural west. Critically assess the connects and disconnects between Federally Qualified Health Centers, Critical Access Hospitals, Indian Health Services, public health departments, community-based organizations, workforce, telehealth systems and informal networks.

MPH 5511 Partnering for Rural Health: 3 semester hours

Develop leadership and team-building skills with traditional and non-traditional partners in rural communities. Apply those skills by developing a funding proposal for a community or organization in a rural setting.

ELECTIVES (Must total 6 credits)

NURS 6612	Health Care of Rural Communities	2
NURS 8809	Research and Practice in Rural and Global Communities	2
HCA 6636	Rural Healthcare Management	3
HIST 5523	Idaho History	3
HIST 6623	Global Idaho	3
ANTH 5506	American Indian Health Issues	3
ANTH 5554	Survey of American Indian Languages	3
ANTH 5572	Native American Arts	3
ANTH 5574	Topics in Indian Education	3
ANTH 5578	Federal Indian Law	3
ANTH 5579	Tribal Governments	3
SPAN 5510	Spanish for the Health Professions	1-2
SPAN 5593	Spanish Internship	1-3
POLS 5553	Public Policy Analysis	3
POLS 5509	Community and Regional Planning	3
POLS 5571	Historical Geography of Idaho	3
or GEOL 5571	Historical Geography of Idaho	
or HIST 5571	Historical Geography of Idaho	

Other Electives as Approved by the Department

PROGRAM CURRICULUM & SCHEDULE

	Fall Semester	Spring Semester
MPH 5503	Health Topics: The Rural West	
MPH 5507	Rural Health Systems	
MPH 5511		Partnering for Rural Health
ELECTIVES	Please check the current ISU Academic Catalog or Class Schedule	Please check the current ISU Academic Catalog or Class Schedule

Summer courses may be offered. Refer to the current ISU Academic Catalog for summer course offerings. This course schedule is subject to change.



APPENDIX A. PROGRAM OF STUDY

Please use this as a guide to help ensure timely graduation!

DEGREE PROGRAM COURSES						
Prefix/Num	Title	Credits	Semester	Year	Grade	Institution
General Requirements						
MPH 5503	Health Topics: Rural Health	3				
MPH 5507	Rural Health Systems	3				
MPH 5511	Partnering for Rural Health	3				
Electives (6 Credits)						



APPENDIX B. MASTER OF PUBLIC HEALTH & RURAL HEALTH CERTIFICATE

You can share nine credits between the MPH and the Graduate Certificate in Rural Health. This means that you can complete the rural health certificate as well as the MPH by only taking six additional course credits. See below for the suggested courses for taking the Graduate Certificate in Rural Health and the MPH.

For more information, review the [Rural Health website](#) and contact Dr. Diana Schow.

Core MPH Requirements (30 credits)	Credits	MPH	Rural Health Certificate
MPH 5540 - Research and Writing 1	1	Y	
MPH 5507 - Rural Health Systems	3	Y	Y
MPH 6601 - Applications in Epidemiology	3	Y	
MPH 6602 - Biostatistics	3	Y	
MPH 6604 - Social & Cultural Persp. in Public Health	3	Y	
MPH 6605 - Leadership and Administration	3	Y	
MPH 6606 - Environmental & Occupational Health	3	Y	
MPH 6609 - Seminar in Community/Public Health	3	Y	Y
MPH 6620 - Health Program Planning	3	Y	
MPH 6640 - Research and Writing 2	2	Y	
MPH 6660 - Health Behavior Change Theory & App.	3	Y	
Approved MPH Electives (12 credits)			
MPH 5511 - Partnering for Rural Health	3	Y	Y
elective	3	Y	
elective	3	Y	
elective	3	Y	
Additional Rural Health Certificate Requirements			
MPH 5503 - The Rural West	3		Y
Rural Health elective	3		Y
TOTAL	48	42	15

APPENDIX C. ETHICS

Graduate students are expected to conduct themselves in an ethical and professional manner. The following statements of common values (from [“Public Health Code of Ethics”](#) American Public Health Association) may serve as guidance for general decision-making during our professional studies.

PUBLIC HEALTH CORE VALUES AND RELATED OBLIGATIONS

The following core ethical values are equally important and are not presented in rank order. These values are multifaceted conceptually and can be realized in practice in different ways. They do not have simple definitions. They require ongoing and explicit reflection and reaffirmation.

A. Professionalism and Trust. The effectiveness of public health policies, practices, and actions depends upon public trust gained through decisions based on the highest ethical, scientific, and professional standards. Public health gains public trust in part because its practices are informed by evidence. When the needed evidence is lacking, public health seeks it, and when the evidence reveals faulty or inadequate practices, public health seeks to improve those practices. At times public health practitioners must respond to a situation in the absence of complete scientific information, which highlights the importance of having an ethical framework to drive decision making. Public health practitioners and organizations promote competence, honesty, and accuracy and ensure that their work is not unduly influenced by secondary interests. Public health decision makers need to be transparent and honest about disclosing conflicting interests and influences.

B. Health and Safety. Health and safety are essential conditions for human flourishing. Public health practitioners and organizations have an ethical responsibility to prevent, minimize, and mitigate health harms and to promote and protect public safety, health, and well-being.

C. Health Justice and Equity. Human flourishing requires the resources and social conditions necessary to secure equal opportunities for the realization of health and other capabilities by individuals and communities. Public health practitioners and organizations have an ethical obligation to use their knowledge, skills, experience, and influence to promote equitable distribution of burdens, benefits, and opportunities for health, regardless of an individual’s or a group’s relative position in social hierarchies. Health justice and equity also extend to ensuring that public health activities do not exacerbate health inequities. In addition, health justice does not pertain only to the distribution of scarce resources in transactions among individuals; it also involves remediation of structural and institutional forms of domination that arise from inequalities related to voice, power, and wealth. It is difficult for public health to promote health justice at the transactional level if it does not take steps to promote it at the structural and institutional levels as well.

D. Interdependence and Solidarity. The health of every individual is linked to the health of every other individual within the human community, to other living creatures, and to the integrity and functioning of environmental ecosystems. Public health practitioners and organizations have an ethical obligation to foster positive—and mitigate negative—relationships among individuals, societies, and environments in ways that protect and promote the flourishing of humans, communities, nonhuman animals, and the ecologies in which they live. Attention to potential intergenerational conflicts over resources can sometimes be essential.

E. Human Rights and Civil Liberties. While coercive legal measures limiting behavior can be ethically justified in certain circumstances, overall, the effective and ethical practice of public health depends upon social Section 2: Public Health Core Values and Related Obligations Public Health Code of Ethics 5 and cultural conditions of respect for personal autonomy, self-determination, privacy, and the absence of domination in its many interpersonal and institutional forms. Contemporary public health respects and helps sustain those social and cultural conditions.

F. Inclusivity and Engagement. Preventing adverse health outcomes and protecting and promoting the flourishing of individuals, societies, and ecosystems require informed public decision-making processes that engage affected individuals and communities. Public health practitioners and organizations have an ethical responsibility to be transparent, to be accountable to the public at large, and to include and engage diverse publics, communities, or stakeholders in their decision making.

APPENDIX D. CAMPUS RESOURCES

There is a wide variety of resources on campus to help ensure your success as a student and to help you truly enjoy your time at ISU.

If you are wondering about where certain offices or programs are located, consider contacting the [Campus Connection Desk](#)

If you have more in-depth questions about matter where you really need support getting things done – whether it’s figuring out how to tap into the computer labs on campus, using the library, getting help with food access, or finding quality counseling and/or disability services for free, contact the [Student Affairs](#) – As they say, “If you don’t know who to talk to, talk to us!”

If for some reason, you cannot find what you are looking for – NEVER hesitate to talk with your Rural Health Certificate advisor. She will help you find any available resources!

APPENDIX E. EQUAL OPPORTUNITY AND AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

The [Office of Equal Opportunity and Title IX](#) ensures compliance with federal regulations and state laws related to discrimination and harassment based on protected classes. The office handles complaints of discrimination and harassment, conduct necessary investigations, prepare recommendations, and issue written reports.

Idaho State University is committed to creating and maintaining a learning and working environment free of discrimination and harassment against any individual based on that person's race, color, religion, gender, age, sexual orientation, national origin, ancestry, physical or mental disability, or Veteran's status. Our helpful, friendly staff are available to work with any university community member.

Office of Equal Opportunity and Title IX

Administration Building
921 S. 8th Ave, STOP 8310
Pocatello ID, 83209-8310
(208) 282-3964
FAX (208) 282-5829