

PUBLIC HEALTH NURSING CERTIFICATION EXAM CONTENT OUTLINE

DOMAIN 1

ASSESSMENT AND ANALYSIS - 20%

This domain encompasses the systematic collection, evaluation, and interpretation of data to identify health needs, emerging threats, and opportunities for intervention. By integrating information from surveillance systems, population health indicators, and evidence-based assessment tools, public health nurses can monitor trends, recognize potential hazards, and anticipate future challenges.

1. Utilize public health surveillance to monitor emerging threats and influence decisions that support public health initiatives.
2. Use a comprehensive set of relevant variables within and across systems to measure health and public health conditions.
3. Assess the needs of individuals, populations, and communities to inform public health interventions.
4. Identify potential hazards or harm to individuals and communities, applying current and historical trends to implement initiatives that impact public health policy.
5. Assess population health indicators, including patterns, trends, and protective factors, using qualitative and quantitative data to improve and protect overall community health.
6. Assess individual or community health literacy levels using evidence-based tools to guide health promotion and disease management.
7. Conduct individual assessments using evidence-based tools and techniques to identify health needs, risks, trends, and overarching community health issues.
8. Use assessment tools and skills to evaluate health needs for individuals, families, and communities to help ensure effective provision of services and avoid gaps in care.
9. Assess the positive and negative impacts of environmental factors on the health of individuals, families, and communities to identify strategies to improve related health outcomes.

This domain addresses how public health nurses ensure communities are prepared for emerging challenges and supported with effective interventions. Using data-driven approaches, nurses plan and implement programs that promote equity, address social conditions, and improve health outcomes. Through education, collaboration, and evidence-based strategies, they empower communities to prevent disease, enhance safety, and strengthen resilience.

1. Anticipate emerging public health challenges and determine priorities to prepare for emergencies (e.g., natural disasters, mass fatalities, outbreaks, bioterrorism) to efficiently meet community needs and mitigate negative impacts.
2. Use health data to plan, develop, and implement services and programs that improve social conditions which influence health and promote equity.
3. Educate individuals, families, and communities on strategies for disease and injury prevention, health care decision-making, safety, and environmental exposures to optimize quality of life.
4. Demonstrate ability to co-create and implement health promotion activities with individuals, families, and communities.
5. Use effective tools and implement interventions to optimize safety in public health processes.

DOMAIN 3

POLICY, ADVOCACY, AND PARTNERSHIPS - 10%

This domain covers how public health nurses collaborate across sectors and build strong partnerships to address population needs and strengthen systems. By using evidence-based data and community input, they inform policy, advocate for access and resources, and promote inclusive processes. Through engagement with diverse stakeholders, nurses drive initiatives that improve outcomes, reduce disparities, and create lasting health impact.

1. Facilitate interdisciplinary, cross-sector collaboration and partnerships to drive health-related change for communities and systems.
2. Advocate for policies and programs that address population health needs, improve access to care, and drive systems-level change, particularly for marginalized and under-resourced populations
3. Use community-informed and evidence-based data to inform policy development that improves health outcomes.
4. Cultivate partnerships with schools, businesses, faith-based groups, and other community organizations to implement public health initiatives.
5. Identify and include diverse community members to co-create inclusive planning, implementation, and evaluation processes.

DOMAIN 4

COMMUNICATION AND CULTURAL COMPETENCE - 19%

This domain covers communication and cultural competence as critical skills for public health nurses to build trust, promote understanding, and support equitable health outcomes. By using appropriate language, visual tools, and culturally tailored strategies, nurses engage effectively with diverse audiences. They adapt messaging to health literacy levels, respect cultural perspectives, and foster safe, inclusive dialogue.

1. Demonstrate active listening and culturally-informed empathy to build trust, validate concerns, and enhance understanding.
2. Adapt verbal, written, and visual communication methods in response to verbal and non-verbal cues, literacy levels, and cultural preferences of individuals or communities.
3. Use plain language, visual aids, and tailored messaging to explain health concepts and address the specific health literacy and needs of the intended audience.
4. Adapt messaging and engage with key community members in culturally appropriate ways to address health priorities and needs.
5. Communicate information to internal and external partners during public health crises or emergencies to achieve and maintain situational awareness.
6. Foster inclusive and safe communication to encourage participation from all community members.
7. Promote cultural humility and understanding of diverse perspectives and incorporates this into assessment practices and program planning.

This domain addresses how nurses guide strategic planning, build inclusive teams, and address challenges through consensus and trust. By aligning resources with priorities, implementing cost-effective practices, and cultivating partnerships, they maximize program impact and outcomes. Through mentorship and professional development, public health nurses also strengthen workforce capacity and ensure sustainable, equitable health outcomes.

1. Participate in strategic planning to communicate a clear vision of public health nursing that aligns with organizational and community priorities and fosters shared ownership of goals and objectives.
2. Foster an inclusive environment that builds trust, supports team members, and manages internal and external conflicts through consensus-building to address public health challenges collaboratively.
3. Align resource allocation with organizational goals, community priorities, and funding requirements to optimize program impact, ensure efficiency, and maintain financial sustainability within budget constraints.
4. Implement cost-effective practices and identify opportunities for resource sharing or partnership to extend program reach.
5. Provide mentorship, training, and professional development opportunities to enhance the skills and capabilities of staff and colleagues.

DOMAIN 6

SYSTEMS AND FOUNDATIONAL KNOWLEDGE - 19%

This domain highlights how systems and foundational knowledge provide the basis for effective public health nursing practice. Nurses apply evidence-based research, epidemiological methods, and public health frameworks to understand health outcomes, address disparities, and promote systems change. It also emphasizes adaptability, holistic response, and the integration of theory into action to protect populations and advance health equity.

1. Identify and mitigate bias in data collection and interpretation to support equitable interventions.
2. Apply promising practices and evidence-based research to inform practice, improve health, protect populations, and reduce disparities.
3. Use valid public health tools and comply with legal, ethical, and organizational standards to evaluate and manage resources responsibly, transparently, and effectively.
4. Apply epidemiological methods to understand incidence and prevalence, protective and risk factors, and health outcomes in specific populations.
5. Assess systemic barriers, including access to quality care, to inform data-driven decisions that guide systems change and reduce health inequities.
6. Apply knowledge of public health frameworks and theories (e.g., social determinants of health, socioecological framework, Maslow's hierarchy of needs, levels of prevention) when identifying individual, family, and community health priorities; advocating for systemic change; and advancing health equity.
7. Evaluate personal readiness and apply the nursing process to guide flexible, adaptable, and holistic emergency response and recovery efforts that meet community needs.
8. Apply a fundamental understanding of the impacts of implicit and explicit biases in nursing practices.

DOMAIN 7

QUALITY AND EVALUATION - 9%

This domain outlines how public health nurses develop and implement policies, procedures, and workflows that support consistent care. By fostering a culture of continuous improvement, they assess processes, monitor performance, and adapt interventions. Through systematic evaluation and evidence-based refinement, nurses strengthen outcomes, enhance efficiency, and ensure programs meet the evolving needs of communities.

1. Implement and contribute to policies, procedures, and workflows to ensure consistent and effective delivery of public health services.
2. Foster a culture of continuous quality improvement by identifying opportunities to enhance practices, systematically reviewing processes and services, and monitoring performance metrics to evaluate outcomes and improve outputs.
3. Continuously evaluate and adapt interventions to help ensure they address the broader systemic or structural factors related to health outcomes.
4. Monitor performance metrics and evaluate program outcomes to drive continuous improvement.