



Massachusetts Association of Public Health Nurses

What do Public Health Nurses do?

If you ask the average American, you may not get much of an answer. Some people might remember that the Public Health Nurse in their community organizes the flu vaccination clinic every year, or that their Public Health Nurse goes to health fairs and other community events to provide health education. They might recall that the Public Health Nurse provides disease screenings such as TB skin testing... but beyond that, community members may not realize that they have a determined nurse working hard every day on their behalf, protecting their health and making their community a safer place to live. A postage stamp honoring and recognizing the work of Public Health Nurses across the country would illuminate their critical contributions to the health of communities everywhere. **We would like to propose the development of a Public Health Nursing postage stamp.**

Unlike hospital nursing, Public Health Nursing is population-based – the Public Health Nurse cares for the health of the entire community instead of one patient at a time. The Public Health Nurse doesn't count herself successful when one patient recovers – she counts herself successful **when people don't get sick in the first place.** For example, Public Health Nurses monitor, track, and respond to outbreaks of infectious diseases, partnering with daycare centers, nursing homes, medical offices, school nurses, and city and state officials. Public Health Nurses conduct case investigations and mass vaccination clinics to stop the spread of disease, providing community education to help people stay healthy (and in some cases providing direct care for those who have become ill). Public Health Nurses also work tirelessly in their communities to prevent illness, injury and disability, advocating for policies that protect the health of the community. In addition, Public Health Nurses collaborate with first responders and other municipal departments to help prepare their communities for emergencies and disasters.

Public Health Nursing is a specialized nursing practice that combines the art and science of nursing with the art and science of public health. The practice of Public Health Nursing is grounded in a belief in social justice, an ethic of caring, and a long-term commitment to the community. Public Health Nurses strive to embody respect for their clients and for their communities' cultural, racial and ethnic diversity, implementing systems theory that acknowledges the dynamic relationship between the individual, the community and society. The Public Health Nurse must have the clinical assessment and treatment skills of a hospital nurse, the systems-analysis skills of a sociologist, the interpersonal skills of a social worker, the education skills of a teacher, and the accounting skills of a bookkeeper. Now more than ever, we need health care champions like this.

For over 100 years, Public Health Nurses have cared for communities across this nation, reaching out to vulnerable and high-risk populations, ensuring that nobody falls through the cracks of the health care system, preparing for small-scale and large-scale infectious disease responses, and protecting the health of all Americans. **Please accept this letter as support for a Public Health Nursing stamp through the United States Postal Service to acknowledge and commemorate this critical contribution to our nation's health.**

Thank you for your consideration.
