



Midwest Center for Occupational Health and Safety
Education and Research Center

Frequently Asked Questions

Occupational and Environmental Health Nursing Program

*University of Minnesota School of Public Health
Environmental Health Sciences Division*

How many nursing students are currently in the Occupational and Environmental Health Nursing (OEHN) program?

There are currently five MPH nursing students who are first year students. Two MPH students graduated in 2020. Typically, 2-5 nursing students enroll per year.

Are all of the OEHN students in the same concentration areas of study?

The study concentrations vary depending on students' interests and experiences. For example, the two OHN students that recently graduated earned a MPH degree with a major in Environmental Health. One student was passionate about emergency preparedness. She took elective course work on the topic, completed field work with the MN Department of Health Emergency Preparedness unit, and earned professional certification in emergency preparedness from the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA). The other student was keenly interested in surveillance of hazardous drugs in response to new standards designed to minimize the risk of exposure to healthcare personnel, patients and the environment. He used his field experience and final research paper to develop expertise on this topic. Our program faculty attempt to match students' interests with their research and field experiences.

Is it possible to work full-time while completing the OEHN graduate program?

Yes, although the recommendation is to start the program with one or two classes to determine the course level that can be managed while working full-time. For some students, taking one on-line class and one in-person class might make an easier transition when beginning the program. The advantage of the in-person class is to benefit from interaction with cross-functional disciplines and develop supportive, on-going relationships.

Is the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) funding assured for students every year?

The federal government authorizes NIOSH funding on a year-to-year basis. This funding primarily provides for tuition support. However, full-time students are eligible for stipends. While economic and political factors may affect the availability of the annual NIOSH funding, since the program began in 1976, tuition support has been available every year. However, we acknowledge there are no guarantees beyond a year at a time.

When does the U of M OEHN program know about funding for the coming academic year?

The University's fiscal year is from July 1 – June 30. The academic year starts in September each year. Students may have access to some carry-over funding from the previous year (for example, if there are unused funds from students taking fewer credits than anticipated) that could be used to support those who start the program some time other than September. Generally, the availability of new funding for the academic year is known by May of the same year.

What if students have an employer with a tuition reimbursement program? Are they still eligible for NIOSH tuition support?

Yes. However, if the employer has tuition support available for the student and the student uses it, it would free up NIOSH funding for other OEHN students, which is a good thing for the program. However, NIOSH tuition support is not contingent upon using employer sponsored tuition reimbursement, if available in company benefits.

If the OEHN's spouse is an employee of the University of Minnesota, does that result in any financial discount to the OEHN student?

No, but it may give the spouse opportunity for the University's scholarships and financial support.

How does the U of M School of Public Health OEHN program interface with the U of M School of Nursing?

We are fortunate that Dr. Carolyn Porta has joined the OEHN Program as co-director as she can assist students in learning about potential elective classes or faculty mentors from the School of Nursing.

Is it possible to take some credits before being accepted into the program and then transfer those credits into the degree program upon acceptance to the program?

It is possible to transfer up to 12 credits into the School of Public Health before being formally accepted into the program. However, tuition support from NIOSH would not be available until formal acceptance into the OEHN program.

How do I get started with the program?

First, interested nurses should talk with one of the OEHN faculty to learn about the various degree plans (MPH in either Public Health Practice or Environmental Health, and the PhD in Environmental Health) in relation to their career goals. After a decision is made, candidates complete an on-line application, submit a transcript from their undergraduate nursing program and letters of support. Because each degree option has a slightly different admissions process, we encourage all applicants to review information at this link: <https://www.sph.umn.edu/prospective/application-process/>