

What is Health Education?

According to the Report of the 2000 Joint Committee on Health Education & Promotion Terminology, Page 7

“Health Education is any combination of planned learning experiences based on sound theories that provide individuals, groups, & communities the opportunity to acquire the information & skills needed to make quality health decisions.”

According to the U.S. Dept. of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics' Occupational Outlook Handbook 2006-07 <http://www.bls.gov/oco/oco20052.htm>

Health Educators (O*NET 21-1091.00):

Promote, maintain, & improve individual & community health by assisting individuals & communities to adopt healthy behaviors. Collect & analyze data to identify community needs prior to planning, implementing, monitoring, & evaluating programs designed to encourage healthy lifestyles, policies & environments. May also serve as a resource to assist individuals, other professionals, or the community, & may administer fiscal resources for health education programs.

Simply put, health educators...

- Use theory to plan, implement, monitor & evaluate programs & resources.
- Educate individuals & communities to make their own health decisions.
- Influence changes in policy & the environment to address health problems.



Washington State Department of Health, Health Education Resource Exchange Handout “What Makes a Health Educator Unique?”

December 2002

What Makes a Health Educator Unique?

Health educators use their skills to engage the community in preventing health problems. They are trained to adapt a variety of skills that support programs. A health educator, as part of a team of public health professionals, is the person who can bring all the pieces of a prevention project together. A health educator can:

1. Conduct community needs assessments

- Has knowledge of community values and attitudes that affect health behavior.

2. Mobilize and involve community groups

- Develop partnerships that bring in funds and resources
- Conduct outreach to diverse audiences
- Facilitate small and large group planning
- Collaborate effectively with audiences to accomplish goals

3. Plan, implement, evaluate prevention programs

- Develop targeted strategies
- Apply social marketing methods including conducting surveys and focus groups

4. Conduct program evaluations

- Apply appropriate evaluation methods
- Use results for program quality improvement

5. Identify and develop resources

- Write grants
- Develop education and outreach materials
- Identify community partners and resources

“Public health educators are the ones who make the link between the people, the community, the science of behavioral change, and the message.”

—Elaine Engle
Director, Health
Education/Promotion
Spokane Regional
Health District