



# Sacred Heart UNIVERSITY

## **Master of Public Health Student Handbook Academic Year 2024-2025**

Dear Master of Public Health Degree Candidate,

Welcome to the graduate program in Public Health. This program has been designed for students interested in a graduate program that examines the field of public health. The program includes common foundation courses as well as specific courses and applied practical experiences related to Community Health.

Our program is fully accredited by the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH).

Enclosed please find detailed descriptions of the program objectives, course descriptions, faculty contact information, learning resources and professional organizations in the field Public Health. In addition, please review information specific to University, College, and degree requirements, policies, and general expectations.

If you have any questions about the program, its policies and procedures, or about Sacred Heart University, please contact one of the faculty, your graduate advisor, or the graduate program director.

Sincerely,

Master of Public Health Faculty and Staff



## INTRODUCTION & SIGNATURE PAGE

### ***Purpose of the Student Manual***

The Student Manual has been prepared as a preliminary announcement of policies and procedures designed to promote understanding and mutual respect among faculty, staff and students enrolled in the Master of Public Health graduate program. This document is a work in progress and is subject to revision as necessary.

The policies outlined in this handbook supersede any policies outlined for the Graduate students.

### ***Updating the Student Manual***

Updates regarding any revisions of the policies and procedures of the Master of Public Health program at Sacred Heart University will be provided in the form of announcements posted on the program website, course sites, and/or hard-copy handouts and addition/replacement pages.

### ***Compliance Agreement***

Please review the manual and retain it for future reference. Sign and date both statements below. This page will be collected during the orientation sessions and filed with your student records.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have read the 2024-2025 Student Manual for the Master of Public Health program at Sacred Heart University, understand the contents, and agree to abide by the policies and procedures as outlined and amended.

In addition, by signing below, I agree to: *(please initial each individual item)*

\_\_\_\_\_ Satisfactorily complete a criminal background check (CBC) within eight (8) weeks of attendance as a condition of matriculation. Detailed information about the CBC is included in this Policies and Procedures Manual. I understand that matriculation will not be final until the completion of the CBC with results deemed acceptable to the Program Director and that all expenses associated with the CBC, fingerprinting, and/or drug screening are my responsibility. I further understand that if I do not consent to the required background check, refuse to provide information necessary to conduct the CBC, or provide false or misleading information in regard to the CBC, I will be subject to disciplinary action up to, and including, refusal of matriculation or dismissal from the program.

\_\_\_\_\_ Should the fieldwork site require that an additional criminal background check be completed within 6—12 months prior to beginning that fieldwork, or, fingerprinting, and/or drug/alcohol testing, I understand that these checks are at my own expense and that I am responsible for completing these tests in the deadlines required by the fieldwork site. I further understand that my ability to be placed in a fieldwork site and completion of the program may be dependent on the results of these tests and that a “flag” on these tests may render me ineligible to be placed in a fieldwork site and therefore unable to complete the program. I understand that Sacred Heart University is not responsible for tuition refunds should the results of any of these checks render me ineligible to be placed in a fieldwork site. (Please see the complete Criminal Background Check policy in this manual).

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Master of Public Health program (MPH) is a structured 42 credit graduate degree program. The three major components of the curriculum are: (1) core courses, (2) community health specialization, and (3) a thesis or final project requirement.

## PROGRAM DIRECTOR

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## PROGRAM FACULTY

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The varied expertise and interdisciplinary character of this team of educators has provided the foundation for the program. All faculty members maintain good standing within the public health profession. Also, all are involved in their respective professional associations in roles such as committee members, board members, members of special interest groups, and speakers at symposia.

Faculty members are assigned MPH students for academic advisement, serve as resources for students and other faculty in their studying and research, and serve as the major advisor or committee member for the Graduate Project/Thesis. The expected mode of communication between faculty and students is the University e-mail system. In circumstances of breakdown of the University's e-mail system and in the case of emergency, students are urged to contact any faculty member immediately via telephone, written document or in-person contact as feasible.

## DEGREE COMPLETION REQUIREMENTS

- 1) Completion of the MPH Program Curriculum with a minimum GPA of 3.0
- 2) Passing grade on the Comprehensive Exam or Thesis Seminar

- 3) Completion of one or more applied practical experiences that yield no less than two quality products (developed in consultation with MPH faculty) for their MPH portfolio. Products must be developed for an organization outside the SHU MPH program and must demonstrate attainment of at least five competencies, of which at least three must be foundational competencies.

## **SHU MPH COMPETENCIES**

### *FOUNDATIONAL COMPETENCIES*

#### **Evidence-based Approaches to Public Health**

1. Apply epidemiological methods to the breadth of settings and situations in public health practice
2. Select quantitative and qualitative data collection methods appropriate for a given public health context
3. Analyze quantitative and qualitative data using biostatistics, informatics, computer-based programming and software, as appropriate

#### **Public Health & Health Care Systems**

4. Interpret results of data analysis for public health research, policy or practice
5. Compare the organization, structure and function of health care, public health and regulatory systems across national and international settings
6. Discuss the means by which structural bias, social inequities and racism undermine health and create challenges to achieving health equity at organizational, community and societal levels

#### **Planning & Management to Promote Health**

7. Assess population needs, assets and capacities that affect communities' health
8. Apply awareness of cultural values and practices to the design or implementation of public health policies or programs
9. Design a population-based policy, program, project or intervention
10. Explain basic principles and tools of budget and resource management
11. Select methods to evaluate public health programs

#### **Policy in Public Health**

12. Discuss multiple dimensions of the policy-making process, including the roles of ethics and evidence
13. Propose strategies to identify stakeholders and build coalitions and partnerships for influencing public health outcomes
14. Advocate for political, social or economic policies and programs that will improve health in diverse populations
15. Evaluate policies for their impact on public health and health equity

#### **Leadership**

16. Apply principles of leadership, governance and management, which include creating a vision, empowering others, fostering collaboration and guiding decision making
17. Apply negotiation and mediation skills to address organizational or community challenges

#### **Communication**

18. Select communication strategies for different audiences and sectors
19. Communicate audience-appropriate public health content, both in writing and through oral presentation
20. Describe the importance of cultural competence in communicating public health content

#### **Interprofessional Practice**

21. Perform effectively on interprofessional teams

#### **Systems Thinking**

22. Apply systems thinking tools to a public health issue

### *CONCENTRATION COMPETENCIES*

1. Specify approaches for assessing and promoting health behaviors that are crucial to human health and safety.
2. Identify opportunities for collaboration between public health agencies and other community-level social services to enhance continuous care in communities.
3. Apply quality and performance improvement concepts to address performance issues in community organizations and coalitions.
4. Develop a health communication campaign for a specific population audience or sector.
5. Develop community health materials that are culturally competent for a specific population.

## **CURRICULUM OVERVIEW**

Current course descriptions can be found on the Sacred Heart University website. In order to complete the program, students must take 42 credits.

### **CORE COURSES – 24 credits**

- ☐ 500 Population Health Science
- ☐ 501 Research Methods for Population Health
- ☐ 502 Biostatistical Methods for Population Health
- ☐ 503 Social Determinants of Health and Health Disparities
- ☐ 505 Program Planning for Public Health Interventions
- ☐ 508 Issues of Diversity & Equity
- ☐ 509 Health Policy, Advocacy and Healthcare
- ☐ 511 Principles of Epidemiology

### **POPULATION HEALTH CONCENTRATION - 9 credits**

- ☐ 550 Implementation Science for Community Health Development
- ☐ 554 Health Communication
- ☐ Population Health Elective (One from: MPH 522, MPH 528 or MPH 526).

### **CAPSTONE SEQUENCE – 6 credits**

- ☐ 597 / 599 Public Health Research/Thesis or 596 / 598 Public Health Seminar/Practicum

### **ELECTIVES – 3-6 credits**

- ☐ 506 Writing and Reporting in Public Health
- ☐ 522 Active Living and Population Health Promotion \*
- ☐ 528 Food, Nutrition & Population Health \*
- ☐ 526 Public Health in Times of Crisis\*

*\*522, 526, 528 also count towards the MPH Concentration.*

### **OPTIONAL - MINOR IN HEALTHCARE ADMINISTRATION**

The MPH with a minor in **Healthcare Administration** prepares students for leadership roles in healthcare, NGO administration, non-profit administration and more. The coursework helps students to develop the skills necessary to be visionary leaders in evidence-based healthcare management and policy with an understanding of population health competencies. This unique program provides interdisciplinary training in public health and healthcare administration that is customizable to allow working professionals to pursue a high-quality low-residency graduate program at SHU.

Coursework to Support the MPH with a Minor in Healthcare Administration:

- MHA 510 Management of Healthcare Organizations
- MHA 512 Health Finance Management & Accounting
- MHA 563 Health Policy, Law, & Ethics
- MHA 621 Health Economics
- MHA 642 Healthcare Operations & Quality

**CURRICULUM DELIVERY:** The MPH program includes required courses that are delivered on-ground, online and many include field work. Class attendance and participation in applied practical experiences (including field work in the community) are essential functions of this program. Accommodation letters do not apply to fieldwork or applied practical experience (APE) requirements.

### ***APPLIED PUBLIC HEALTH PROJECT OR THESIS***

All students must choose a capstone project that is either a Practicum (applied public health project) or a thesis in order to fulfill program requirements.

### ***THESIS OPTION EXPLANATION***

The thesis requires students to design and implement a research study that is tailored to the student's individual learning and professional development objectives. The thesis is designed so that students will carry out disciplined inquiry focused on a question that is relevant to their practice setting or professional goals. The thesis will be an original contribution to knowledge resulting from the systematic study of a significant problem or issue in the field of public health. It is required that the student chooses two (2) faculty members to advise the thesis. Every thesis must be chaired by a faculty advisor from the MPH program and include an Associate Advisor. Students are encouraged to seek out faculty members that are most familiar with their proposed area of study. With the permission of the Thesis Chair, the Associate Advisor may be from an outside University or corporation. Collaborative theses (authored by two students) are allowed, but individual pursuits are preferred. If you are to propose a collaborative thesis, both students must include a clear statement as to the responsibility of each individual. Collaborative theses are never to be filed separately. It is expected that your thesis will produce data worthy of publication in field-related peer-reviewed journals. You will be required to develop an abstract worthy of submission to a national public health conference. Matriculation in the program will not depend on a successful publication effort. If you have not submitted your thesis work for publication within one calendar year of a successful thesis defense date, you agree to cede primary authorship to your thesis advisor.

Because students choosing thesis do not take the seminar course associated with the Applied Public Health Project Option, they are required to fulfill the Portfolio product requirement through their courses or other means. The Portfolio product requirement is that students complete at least two products for an organization external to the SHU MPH. Product examples include written assignments, projects, videos, multi-media presentations, spreadsheets, websites, posters, photos or other digital artifacts of learning. The applied practice experiences allow each student to demonstrate attainment of at least five competencies, of which at least three must be foundational competencies.

### ***PRACTICUM OPTION EXPLANATION***

The Practicum (aka: applied public health project\_ requires students to complete an applied project working in a public health setting. The applied project may be, but is not limited to, a needs assessment, asset mapping, strategic plan, evaluation plan, and/or data analysis. The proposed project must be approved by the Academic Fieldwork Coordinator using the Practicum Project form. Practicum Project form requires students to work with their site supervisor to describe the proposed project and list learning objectives, project deliverables, and a project timeline. Students completing the Practicum Project will also participate in a seminar course with other MPH students who choose the Public Health Project option. By the end of the Practicum Project option, all students should have a minimum of two products, which were developed for an organization outside the SHU MPH program. Product examples include written assignments, projects, videos, multi-media presentations, spreadsheets, websites, posters, photos or other digital artifacts of learning. The applied practice experiences allow each student to demonstrate attainment of at least five competencies, of which at least three must be foundational competencies.

## **COMPREHENSIVE EXAM**

All students who choose the Practicum experience must also complete a comprehensive examination in their final semester of the program. The comprehensive exam requires students to integrate knowledge learned throughout their learning experiences in the MPH program. The comprehensive exam includes open ended, applied public health questions. The exam is graded with a standard grading rubric by the MPH faculty. Students earn a pass/fail grade based on their performance on the exam. Students who fail the exam have the opportunity to take a subsequent oral examination during which they are asked questions, which demonstrate their ability to integrate knowledge from across the curriculum. A pass on the comprehensive exam is required for graduation among students who choose the APE option.

## **PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

Students are encouraged to explore the following websites and discuss professional affiliations and certifications with your primary academic advisor.

Graduate students enrolled “full time” (18 credits per year) are often eligible for reduced membership rates for professional societies and organizations. Student membership provides access to online full-text and/or hard copy subscriptions to an organization’s journals and newsletters. MPH students are encouraged to consider this additional expense as an important investment for professional development.

### **The American Public Health Association (APHA)**

[www.apha.org](http://www.apha.org)

### **American Academy of Health Behavior (AAHB)**

[www.aahb.org](http://www.aahb.org)

### **Society of Behavioral Medicine (SBM)**

[www.sbm.org](http://www.sbm.org)

### **American College of Epidemiology (ACE)**

[www.ace.org](http://www.ace.org)

## **ACADEMIC REGULATIONS**



### ***Confidentiality of Student Records***

Departmental student records are available for review by that student in accordance with federal law and University policy. The records are released to third parties only with the written consent of the student. Third parties include parents/guardians and spouses for graduate students. Departmental faculty members, designated members of pertinent committees, and College officials will have access to student records as necessary for the performance of their duties.

### ***Grade Changes***

Once officially recorded, grades may be changed only by the instructor through the filing of an official grade change form. Students should assume responsibility for checking with the instructor and with the University Registrar to be certain the grade change has been recorded.

### ***Incomplete Course Work***

An incomplete may be changed by completing the deficient course work no later than six weeks after the beginning of the following semester. In unusual circumstances, the six-week period can be extended up to one year with the approval of the faculty and program director. Degree credit for incomplete courses will not be granted unless the work is completed by the date assigned, which must be no later than one calendar year of the date on which the incomplete date is reported. Any incomplete grade not changed within this designated time period will revert to an "F".

### ***Late Assignments***

In the absence of communicated extenuating circumstances that impact work, all late assignments in MPH courses are subject to the following deductions:

- 0-24 Hours Late = 25% deduction
- 24-48 hours late = 50% deduction
- 48+ hours = zero credit

## **EXAM POLICIES**

### ***Missed Written or Practical Examinations***

If a student is unable to attend a written, oral, or practical examination, the student must provide the instructor with a valid reason for the absence prior to that exam. Acceptable reasons for absence include substantial illness, religious holiday, death in the family, or natural disaster. Failure to follow this procedure will result in a grade of zero for the missed exam. Students who miss an exam due to an unforeseen situation must contact the instructor within 48 hours. It is the instructor's prerogative to handle each situation on a case by case basis.

Students are responsible for arranging make-up exams with the appropriate instructor no later than one week following a missed exam. Make-up exams are not necessarily automatic, and are given at the discretion of the instructor. Failure to make acceptable arrangements within one week will result in a grade of zero for the missed exam. The format of the make-up exam is up to the instructor.

### ***Illness During Exams***

Students who become ill during an exam must notify the course instructor immediately.

### ***Failed Exams***

If a student fails a written or practical examination, it is the student's responsibility to make an appointment with the course instructor to discuss his/her performance on the exam. The intent of the appointment is to assist the student in identifying the problem(s) or deficiency(s) and, when possible, to identify remediation strategies prior to the next exam.

### ***Exam Grade Justification***

A student who wishes to question the accuracy or justification of an exam grade must do so in writing within 1 week of receiving the grade. Requests received after that time need not be considered by the instructor. This policy also applies to any graded assignment.

### ***Grading Policy***

Grading criteria are included in each course syllabus. Syllabi are posted on the Blackboard website for each course. The Master of Public Health program adheres to the academic standards, policies, and procedures defined in the Sacred Heart University Graduate Student Catalog. A student's semester and grade point averages (GPA) will be calculated based on course grade QPA points (see table below). The grading scale used for determination of course grades in at Sacred Heart University is:

<u>Grade</u>	<u>QPA points</u>	<u>Numerical Grade</u>
A	4.0	93-100%
A-	3.67	90- 92.5%
B+	3.33	87- 89.5%
B	3.0	83- 86.5%
B-	2.67	80- 82.5%
C+	2.33	77- 79.5%
C	2.0	73- 76% * Minimal for successful completion
F	0.0	Unacceptable
I	0.0	Incomplete, intending to complete the course
W	0.0	Official Withdrawal (within first 5 weeks of semester)
WF	0.0	Withdrawn while failing or unofficial withdrawal

## ***SPECIAL ACADEMIC ISSUES***

### ***Program Withdrawals***

Official withdrawal from the Master of Public Health program must be accomplished by completing all appropriate paperwork for both the program and for the University. The student should contact his/her major advisor regarding the procedure for withdrawal, and the advisor will guide the student in the withdrawal process. The student must also consult directly with the Program Director concerning withdrawal from the program. Verbal withdrawal or absence from class is NOT sufficient.

### ***Leave of Absence***

A student wishing to take a leave of absence must contact the Program Director in order to discuss personal and academic concerns that could result in permission for leave of absence. The student must submit a written statement indicating the expected time frame of the leave of absence and that the time away from the plan of study has come about at the student's request. Final approval for leave of absence will be given by the Program Director.

### ***Continuation in the MPH Program***

In order to move forward in the MPH program, students must:

- successfully complete (with a grade of "C" or better) the required Master of Public Health courses in a given semester
- maintain a minimum of a 3.0 semester and cumulative GPA

### ***Academic Probation***

A student with a cumulative grade point average below 3.0 will be automatically placed on academic probation by the Professional Performance Committee (PPC). Decisions and subsequent action by the PPC may include remediation of a course (e.g., repetition of a class) up to and including recommendation to the Dean to dismiss from the MPH program. Probationary status is removed by meeting the conditions of the probation as set by the PPC.

### ***Dismissal from the Master of Public Health Program***

A student placed on academic probation will need to achieve a semester GPA of 3.0 during the probation period. If at the end of the probationary semester the semester GPA is less than a 3.0, the PPC will recommend to the Dean that the student is dismissed from the graduate program. In addition, the PPC may recommend dismissal:

- for failure to successfully complete any required MPH course
- for failure to pass (grade of C or better) a course for a second time
- for failure to successfully clear probationary status in the time allowed
- in the event of suspension or dismissal from the University for non-academic reasons
- as a result of violation of policies of academic honesty and academic ethics
- or for any behavior which threatens the safety or rights of University faculty, staff or students.

A student who has been dismissed can appeal the dismissal if they believe their academic deficiencies are due to extenuating circumstances. Appeals must include a reflection on the cause of the poor performance, documentation of any extenuating circumstances, and a plan of action for improving performance if you are admitted back into the program. The appeal and all supporting documentation of the appeal must be presented within 14 days after receipt of the formal dismissal letter OR by the deadline provided in the dismissal letter. All appeals must be submitted to the Dean of the College of Health Professions by the deadline provided in the dismissal letter.

### ***Graduate Assistantships***

All students hired as graduate assistants for the Master of Public Health Program are expected to complete their job requirements as outlined in the job description at the time of application. At any time a student can access a copy of their graduate assistantship application from the MPH Program Director. Unless noted differently in the job description, graduate assistants are expected to work 10 hours per week under the direction of their assigned supervisor. Graduate Assistants will work with their Supervisor to identify a weekly schedule. All graduate assistants will be reviewed annually by their supervisor to determine renewal of the graduate assistantship for the subsequent academic year. Graduate Assistants are subject to removal from their position if they are not meeting their job expectations. The process for removal includes:

- an initial meeting between the graduate assistant and supervisor with documentation outlining unmet expectations a plan for resolving the issue
- a follow-up meeting between both parties to review if the issues have been resolved within 6 weeks of the original meeting with supporting documentation.
- if the graduate assistant's work performance has not improved by the follow-up meeting, the supervisor has the right to remove the graduate assistant from the position, which will result in a loss of remaining funding.

- the graduate assistant has the right to submit a written dismissal appeal to the Master of Public Health Program Director.

### ***Procedure for Complaints***

Students are urged first to bring concerns/complaints to the party(s) involved (e.g., faculty member/instructor, classmate etc.) If concerns/complaints cannot be addressed in this manner, students are encouraged to seek guidance and resolution through their academic advisor, program director and ultimately the Dean of the College. All formal complaints must be received in writing and must be signed and dated. Complaints and/or suggestions are recognized as an opportunity for program improvement and should be expressed with this end in mind.

### ***Requirements to Graduate***

In order to graduate from the Master of Public Health Program, all academic coursework and graduate capstone activities must be successfully completed with a *cumulative grade point average of 3.0*. In addition, students must complete the pre-graduation paperwork required by the University Registrar's office. A timeline for submitting pre-graduation paperwork may be obtained from the University Registrar's office. It is the student's responsibility to stay on top of graduation-related deadlines. Please see the University website for relevant deadlines:

(<https://www.sacredheart.edu/academics/commencement/applyingforgraduation/>).

### ***Time Limit for Full-Time Students Seeking the MPH Degree***

All requirements, including the defense of the thesis or completion of graduate projects, must be met within six years of admission to the degree program (i.e., the first day of class).

## **GUIDELINES FOR STUDENT CONDUCT**

### ***Professional Behavior***

Students enrolled in the Master of Public Health program are expected to adhere to the Principles of Ethical Practice of Public Health as outlined by the Public Health Leadership Society in 2002. When class assignments or graduate project-related activities involve patients, community members, and professional colleagues, students are expected to adhere to appropriate state practice guidelines, patient bill of rights, and University and facility guidelines about informed consent and protection of human subjects. Professionalism is demonstrated by appropriate affective, cognitive, and psychomotor behaviors during interaction with others; displaying continuous positive regard for fellow students, faculty, staff, professional peers, and patients/clients and their families; and demonstrating responsibility for ones actions and outcomes.

To ensure common preparation and competency in Ethics, all students will be required to complete the CITI Ethics Training. This will be completed during PBH 400: Profession and Science of Public Health.

### ***Academic Integrity***

The program adheres to the Sacred Heart University Policy on Academic Integrity (adopted AY 2001-2002) as published in the graduate catalog. Appropriate measures including the assigning of a failing grade and/or dismissal from the MPH program and the University will be taken in clear cases of academic dishonesty.

### ***Sacred Heart University Student Handbook.***

Students should refer to the Sacred Heart University Student handbook, available on the University website for additional student conduct guidelines related to discrimination, sexual harassment, and more.

## **ONLINE LEARNING AT SACRED HEART UNIVERSITY**

## ***Help Desk and Call Center***

The Information Technology Department at Sacred Heart University offers technical assistance by phone for 6-8 hours daily. This phone based help desk is manned by staff and work-study students with special training on the Blackboard system, which is used to deliver courses at SHU. For more information on Information Technology, please visit the following webpage:

<http://www.sacredheart.edu/officeservices/informationtechnology/>

## **Criminal Background Policy**

Successful completion of the MPH Graduate Program at Sacred Heart University includes satisfactory completion of applied practice experiences (APE). A majority of clinical sites and some community organizations now require students to complete a criminal background check prior to participating applied experiences. Some facilities may also require fingerprinting and/or drug screening. Therefore, students with criminal convictions or backgrounds may not be able to participate in the applied public health experiences off campus. Rather, these persons should choose to do a thesis option that does not require human subjects interaction.

It is, therefore, the policy of the MPH Graduate Program that all admitted students planning to enroll in the MPH program must consent, submit to, and satisfactorily complete a criminal background check (CBC) within six (6) weeks of registration for courses as a condition of matriculation. Matriculation will not be final until the completion of the criminal background check with results deemed acceptable to the Program Director or Academic Fieldwork Coordinator. All expenses associated with the CBC, fingerprinting, and/or drug screening are the responsibility of the applicant/student. Students who do not consent to the required background check, refuse to provide information necessary to conduct the background check, or provide false or misleading information in regard to the background check will be subject to disciplinary action up to, and including, refusal of matriculation or dismissal from the program.

Some health care, community, and educational organizations require students to use a specific company to obtain background checks, drug testing, or fingerprinting; other facilities accept background checks from any company. The Academic Fieldwork Coordinator will advise students prior to their placement if the site requires a specific company for the CBC, drug screening, or fingerprinting. It will be the student's responsibility to complete the background check, drug screening, or fingerprinting with the required company at their own expense within the timeframe specified by the site. If a site requires CBCs be completed with a company other than [www.certifiedbackground.com](http://www.certifiedbackground.com), the background check results may be sent to the site. The policy regarding who receives the results is determined by the site, not the MPH Program or Sacred Heart University.

Certified Background website [www.certifiedbackground.com](http://www.certifiedbackground.com), provides CBCs, which will include felonies, misdemeanors, and sex offender status at federal, state, and local levels from seven previous years of residence. Each student must contact [www.certifiedbackground.com](http://www.certifiedbackground.com) via a secure internet site ([www.certifiedbackground.com](http://www.certifiedbackground.com)) and place an order for his/her CBC. Specific instructions and product code information will be provided by the Public Health Program Director.

Because several health care, community, and educational organizations require the *university* to provide students' CBC results, the Academic Fieldwork Coordinator will need to have access to Certified Background inquiry results during a student's active enrollment in the MPH Program at Sacred Heart

University. Students authorize this access during the online order processing of their CBC, by checking the box indicating agreement with Certified Background's terms and conditions of use (<https://www.certifiedprofile.com/terms>). In the case of adverse information in a CBC report, the Academic Fieldwork Coordinator will proceed as follows:

The Academic Fieldwork Coordinator will review the student's University/Program/Major application to determine whether the student reported the offense on his/her application.

The Academic Fieldwork Coordinator will contact the student to discuss the results and the student's perspective on the circumstances. The conversation will be documented in writing and included in the student's file. The student will be asked to sign an acknowledgement that they understand a flagged background check may impede their ability to be placed in an APE and will likely require them to choose a thesis option. The University will have no obligation to refund tuition or otherwise accommodate students in the event that a CBC or drug screening renders the student ineligible to complete an applied experience placement(s).

Should the student choose to continue in the program, the Academic Fieldwork Coordinator will recommend the student choose a thesis option that requires no human subjects interaction.

If the student feels that an adverse CBC finding is in error, the student will be directed to speak with Certified Background to determine if further investigation is needed. Errors may occur in instances of:

- CBC was completed on a different person with the same name
- CBC was completed on a similarly named person
- CBC returned information that was supposed to be sealed or expunged

If the information is in error, the CBC is repeated and Certified Background will update the CBC report online. If the adverse information is truly an error, no further action is taken.

Some health care, community, and educational organizations may require a clean report of a criminal background check within 6-12 months of the APE. Therefore, repeated or additional background checks prior to the start of an APE may be required at the student's own expense. These requirements should be listed explicitly on the Community/Clinical Site Information Form (CSIF). Sites may also notify the MPH Program by letter or electronically, or by noting the requirements on confirmation forms as appropriate.

Prior to each applied public health experience, the Academic Fieldwork Coordinator will provide the following attestation in his/her communications with each community/clinical site:

*The MPH Graduate Program at Sacred Heart University obtains criminal background checks on all students upon admission to the program. Unless otherwise noted, the background check for the student assigned to your facility contained no adverse information.*

If the APE site requires more specific documentation, the student will be directed to provide a print-out of his/her results from the Certified Background website.

Criminal background information is strictly confidential, for use only by authorized MPH Program faculty, and shall be retained only until the student graduates or is dismissed from the program.