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Week 8: Public Environment & Health

Module 1: Introduction to Public Health

Lesson: Who Controls Health in a Community?

Lesson Overview

Students learn how public health is different from treating one patient by examining how communities prevent health problems. They gather evidence from the module to understand how public health systems identify problems, create solutions, and ensure people receive support. Students use that evidence to apply their understanding to a new community health challenge.

Learning Targets

Explain how public health is different from treating one person.

Identify how communities use data, rules, and services to solve health problems.

Build and improve a public health system using cause-and-effect reasoning.

Vocabulary

Public Health
improving health for entire communities

Assessment
collecting and analyzing health information to identify health problems and risks

Policy Development
creating solutions, programs, rules, or laws to address health problems

Assurance
making sure people can access services and support

Materials

Module
Student response sheets
Whiteboard or chart paper

Instructional Notes

This lesson introduces students to public health as a community-wide approach to improving health. Many students enter the lesson viewing health problems primarily through the lens of doctors, hospitals, and individual treatment. Through the module, students develop the understanding that public health focuses on preventing disease, promoting health, and protecting entire communities. The major conceptual shift is from thinking about individual care to thinking about systems. Students discover that public health relies on assessment, policy development, and assurance working together. They examine how data collection, education, policies, community partnerships, and services help address health challenges. Students may initially believe that one group or organization can solve a community health problem.



Learning Experience

8 min	Opening	The teacher displays the scenario: “A community has a sudden increase in asthma attacks. Students are missing school because they cannot breathe.” Students independently choose ONE group they think should solve the problem: Doctors, Schools, Government, or Families. Students then discuss their choices with a partner and explain their reasoning. The teacher reveals new evidence: “New information shows the asthma attacks are linked to air pollution from nearby factories.” Students are invited to revise their thinking based on the new evidence. The teacher facilitates a brief whole-class discussion. Students choose one group and explain their reasoning, discuss their thinking with a partner, revise their thinking after receiving new evidence, and share revised thinking with the class
15 min	Module	Focus: Students gather evidence about: • What public health is • How public health differs from clinical care • How assessment, policy development, and assurance work together to address community health problems Guiding Questions: • What problems affect many people at once? • How is public health different from treating one person? • What are the three core functions of public health?
15 min	Application	The teacher displays the scenario: “A growing city has seen a sharp increase in injuries involving electric scooters. Emergency rooms are treating more injured riders. City leaders want to reduce injuries while still allowing people to use scooters.” The teacher tells students: “You are a public health team. Use evidence from the module to create a public health response to this community problem.” Students are reminded to use ideas from the module, including assessment, policy development, assurance, prevention, data collection, education, laws, and community-wide solutions. As students work, the teacher circulates and asks: “What evidence from the module supports your decision?” “Which part is assessment, policy development, or assurance?” and “How does this help the community rather than just one injured person?” In Step 1: Identify the Problem, students write a one-sentence summary of the community health challenge and determine one piece of information a public health team should collect before making decisions. In Step 2: Build a Public Health Response, students identify one action for Assessment, identify one action for Policy Development, and identify one action for Assurance. In Step 3: Explain the System, students explain how the three parts work together to reduce injuries and share and compare ideas with a partner or another group. In Step 4: Revise the Plan, the teacher reveals: “After three months, injuries have decreased only slightly.” Students revise one part of the system and explain why the revision could make the public health response more effective.



		Sentence Frames: "Our assessment should focus on ____." "One policy or solution could be ____." "To provide assurance, the community should ____." "Our system works because ____." "We revised ____ because ____."
2 min	Reflection	How did your thinking about who solves community health problems change during this lesson?
2 min	Career Connections	Public health professionals work to improve health across entire communities. Epidemiologists collect and analyze data, health educators inform communities, policy leaders develop solutions, and public health workers help ensure people receive services. Together, these professionals use assessment, policy development, and assurance to address health challenges and protect community well-being.