

Informational Interviewing

**Get excited**: One of the best ways to gain knowledge about public health careers is to meet people who are already working in the field (or type of organization) that interests you. These individuals can share knowledge with you about their specific field and their journey. They may be able to give you pointers on how to get started in the field, and tips on how to be successful. These relationships you build can become very important – the contacts you meet may be able to help you with your APE/Practicum search. And eventually, down the road, a job lead!

**Beware:** It is very important to respect the boundaries of an informational interview. It is not to be confused with a job interview. Most public health professionals will make themselves available for an informational interview – especially a student - but if they feel you are looking for something they can’t give you (ie) a job) they could turn down the request for the interview. Make it a point to never ask for/about a job when you are trying to arrange the informational interview. Keep it all about the learning and the advice. Make it clear right up front that you are a student, seeking advice and knowledge. Providing clarity to the contact is important – if you are not clear, and the contact thinks you are job searching, the meeting might not occur.

**Research**: Be sure to research the field, the individual, the organization before the meeting. The more information you have, the more informed questions you can ask. Your preparation will make a favorable impression on the contact, and the conversation will be more productive.

Most informational interviews last no more than 20-30 minutes. Always be very respectful of their time. Questions to consider asking are below. Select approximately 10 questions that appeal to you.

***Career Preparation questions***:

1. How did you get into this field? Can you share with a little about your career journey?
2. What skills, aptitudes or personal qualifications do people need for this occupation, or to work in this organization? How did you acquire those skills?
3. What preparation, education, training or background is required for entrance in this field?
4. What personal traits, values, and interests are necessary or helpful to succeed in or advance in this occupation/organization?
5. What is a typical career path in this field/organization?
6. What entry-level jobs offer the best opportunities for learning and growth within the industry?
7. What types of training do companies offer those who enter the field?
8. What is hardest part of transitioning into this career?

**Job specific questions**:

1. What responsibilities and duties do you have?
2. What are the opportunities to be creative/innovative in your role?
3. What projects have you worked on that have been particularly interesting?
4. Do you mostly work individually or in teams/groups?
5. How many people do you supervise?
6. What do you find most challenging about the work you do? What do you find most

rewarding?

15. Are there organizations/memberships you are expected to join?

***Specific Organization questions:***

16. How would you describe the work culture/environment (work style, management style)?

17. What are the opportunities for advancement/promotion or job changes in the organization?

18. What does the company do to contribute to its employees’ professional development?

19. Is the atmosphere at the company fairly formal or more casual and informal?

21. How does the company evaluate your job performance?

***Industry Questions:***

22. Where do you see this industry going in the next few years?

23. How is the economy affecting the industry?

***Wrap up:***

24. What advice would you give to someone looking to start out in this career/advance to this job/switch careers into this field?

25.Are there local / national organizations that you recommend I join?

26. Do you have any suggested next steps for me? Perhaps other people I might contact who have jobs similar to yours? Or perhaps ones who are looking for interns?

And don’t forget! Write a thank you e-mail within **24 hours**. An example is below:

Subject: Thank You

Dear (insert first name),

It was a pleasure speaking with you earlier today. I appreciate your willingness to take the time out of your busy schedule to offer me valuable insight about entering the XXXX field. I learned so much from our conversation, and I will definitely follow your suggestion to XXXX and XXXX. In addition, thank you for connecting me with XXX. I will reach out to them immediately.

Thank you again for your advice and time, (*insert first name)*. It was a pleasure!

Sincerely,

Your name