

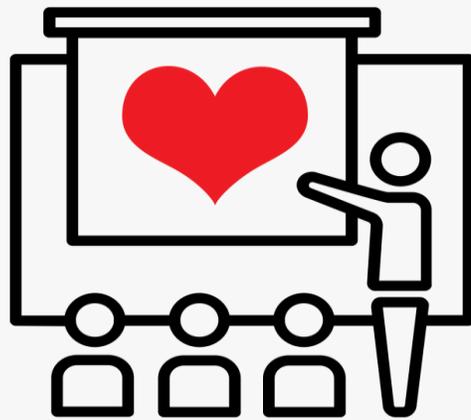
The health education workforce is essential to educating the public about the health impacts of climate change, as well as working to decrease the impact of harmful climate changes on the environment (e.g. air quality), especially for vulnerable populations.

WHAT IS A HEALTH EDUCATION SPECIALIST?

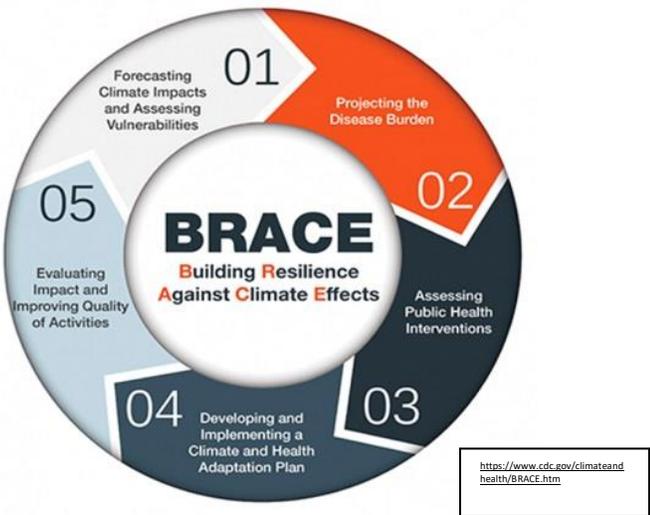
Health education specialists prevent diseases and injury by influencing behaviors, systems, environments, and policies of individuals and communities. They promote screening for early detection of health issues and help those impacted by disease to manage their conditions.

Health education specialists reduce costly premature death and disability and help reduce the related financial and human costs of medical treatment.

Those who are eligible by training and have passed the exam for recognition as certified health education specialists (CHES) or master certified health education specialists (MCHES) are eligible to be reimbursed for specific patient counseling services¹.



Building Resilience Against Climate Effects



WHERE DO HEALTH EDUCATION SPECIALISTS WORK?

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, there are more than 62,200 health education specialists throughout the United States. These individuals have at least a bachelor's degree and work in state/local health departments, health care settings, worksites, community-based organizations, and K-12 schools¹. The demand for health education specialists is expected to continue to grow 13 percent in the next

decade, much faster than other occupations. This is due to continued emphasis on improving health outcomes and reducing healthcare costs.

WHY ARE HEALTH EDUCATION SPECIALISTS VITAL IN CLIMATE CHANGE EFFORTS?

Health education specialists provide science-based information and education on the impacts of climate on health to consumers, health care professionals, and other audiences. Research shows that although most individuals are aware that climate can affect health, they are unsure what specific health problems are caused or intensified by changes to the environment². The lack of information affects people's health, safety, and well-being, and hinders their ability to make informed decisions to protect themselves, their families, and communities.

WHAT APPROACHES DO HEALTH EDUCATION SPECIALISTS USE?

Health education specialists work with health teams to apply the CDC Building Resilience Against Climate Effects (BRACE) framework. BRACE is a five-step process in developing strategies and programs to help communities prepare for the health effects of climate change, such as incorporating short- and long-range climate projections into public health planning and response activities³.

¹ National Commission for Health Education Credentialing, Inc. (2020). Areas of Responsibility, Competencies and Sub-Competencies for Health Education Specialist Practice Analysis II 2020 (HESPA II 2020). NCHEC. https://assets.speakcdn.com/assets/2251/hespa_competencies_and_sub-competencies_052020.pdf

² CDC. (2019). Climate and Health - CDC's Building Resilience Against Climate Effects (BRACE) Framework. Climate and Health; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/climateandhealth/BRACE.htm>

³ CDC. (2019). Climate and Health - CDC's Building Resilience Against Climate Effects (BRACE) Framework. Climate and Health; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/climateandhealth/BRACE.htm>

⁴ Kreslake, J. M., Sarfaty, M., Roser-Renouf, C., Leiserowitz, A. A., & Maibach, E. W. (2018). The Critical Roles of Health Professionals in Climate Change Prevention and Preparedness. American Journal of Public Health, 108(S2), S68–S69.

HOW DO HEALTH EDUCATION SPECIALISTS ADDRESS THE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON VULNERABLE POPULATIONS?

- Incorporating climate and health education into K-12 school curricula for students, families and staff, and addressing special pediatric health conditions (e.g. asthma)⁴.
- Reaching out and educating special populations (e.g. children/parents, elderly) whose health is exacerbated by climate changes using specialized communication messages and channels³.
- Working with urban or rural planners, transportation agencies, food systems, and other community stakeholders to identify and implement solutions to mitigate the impact of climate on low-income, minority or other populations.
- Evaluating interventions and solutions aimed to decrease the impact of climate changes on health of vulnerable community groups, e.g. providing transportation alternatives to access fruits and vegetables³.
- Advocating for policy changes to mitigate the harmful effects of climate on various populations, including rural and indigenous communities.
- Working with hospital or other health care systems, to prepare for and deal with the impacts of various climate-exacerbated health conditions (e.g. elderly heat stroke) in extreme temperatures².
- Assisting individuals, families, and communities to prepare for and recover from health emergencies due to climate, such as flooding³.

HOW ARE HEALTH EDUCATION SPECIALISTS DIFFERENT FROM COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS?

A Community Health Worker (CHW) is a frontline public health worker who is a trusted member of and/or has an unusually close understanding of the community served. This trusting relationship enable the CHW to serve as a liaison/line/intermediary between health/social services and the community to facilitate access to serves and improve the quality and cultural competence of service delivery. Some other titles may include lay health advisors, community health advocates and promotores de salud.

Requirements for CHWs vary, although they typically have at least a high school diploma and must complete a brief period of on-the-job training. Some states have programs offered through community colleges or have specific certification requirements.

Although their training and qualifications differ, they work in tandem, often with health educators supervising the development and delivery of programs and services provided by CHWS.