

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND FAMILY STUDIES, B.S. (HEALTH AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT)

Seven Penn State campuses are scheduled for closure after Spring 2027: DuBois, Fayette, New Kensington, Mont Alto, Shenango, Wilkes-Barre, and York. New students are not being admitted at these campuses.

Begin Campus: Any Penn State Campus

End Campus: University Park, World Campus

Program Description

This major is a multidisciplinary program that examines the development of individuals and families across the life span. HDFS prepares graduates for professional, managerial, or scientific roles in health and human services professions, in public and nonprofit agencies, and in business and industry, as well as for advanced professional or graduate study. Students obtain a broad background in individual and family development across the life span. Courses emphasize biological, psychological, social/cultural, and economic aspects of development as well as applied skill development. We strive for our curriculum (and the experiences and opportunities we extend to students) to foster cultural humility and highlight diverse characteristics, contexts and considerations that impact individuals, families, and communities.

Two options are available within the major:

1. Human Development and Family Science Option
2. Developmental Science for Health Professions Option

All students pursuing the HDFS B.S. are guided to complete a capstone experience customized to their interests. Capstones may include approved field experiences (internships), guided research experiences/projects, and advanced coursework selected to align with individual student interests.

Human Development and Family Science Option

Available at the following campuses: Altoona, Brandywine, DuBois, Fayette, Harrisburg, Mont Alto, Scranton, Shenango, University Park, World Campus, York

This option focuses on the acquisition and application of scientific knowledge about development and family functioning across the life span for the purposes of enhancing personal and family development. Courses emphasize:

1. understanding the biological, psychological, and social development across the life span, and the structuring and functioning of families;
2. understanding basic theoretical and methodological issues; and
3. the development of applied skills in intervention and evaluation, prevention, and in the formulation of social policy.

Students in this option often pursue internships in service settings that work with children, youth, and/or adults. Typical employment settings include preschools, daycare centers, hospital programs for children, youth, and families, institutional and community mental health programs for individuals and families, programs for abused or neglected children

and adolescents, women's resource centers, human resources programs, employee assistance programs, nursing homes, area agencies on aging and other community settings for older adults, and public welfare and family service agencies. This option also provides preparation for advanced training in careers in developmental or family research, teaching at a college or university, or for professional careers that require graduate training. Typical postgraduate pursuits of students completing this option include graduate study in human development, family studies, psychology, or sociology, or advanced professional training in psychology, law, behavioral health, counseling or social work, or other programs related to services for individuals and families.

Developmental Science for Health Professions Option

Available at the following campuses: Altoona, Brandywine, DuBois, Fayette, Mont Alto, Scranton, Shenango, University Park, York

This option is designed for students interested in focusing on human development/developmental science as a foundation to pursue health-related post graduate studies or work careers. This option guides students to acquire and apply scientific knowledge about human development (and family functioning) across the life span; emphasizing understanding biological, psychological, and social development across the life span. Additional coursework focuses on health across contexts. Students also select science foundation courses to complement their study of development across the lifespan and align with their career/post-graduate study interests. Typical postgraduate pursuits of students completing this option include graduate or professional studies in health-related areas (e.g. pediatrics, adolescent medicine, geriatrics, family medicine, psychiatry).

What is Human Development and Family Studies?

Human Development and Family Studies (HDFS) is an interdisciplinary major grounded in developmental science that helps students understand how people grow and thrive across the lifespan. Drawing on psychology, sociology, and public policy, HDFS examines how individuals, families, communities, and social systems influence cognitive, social, physical, and emotional well-being. Students gain hands-on experience through internships, research, and other experiential learning opportunities that build practical, professional skills.

HDFS offers two options: Human Development and Family Science, for students interested in careers improving the well-being of children, families, and communities, and Developmental Science for Health Professions, designed for students preparing for health-related graduate programs. All students complete a customized capstone aligned with their goals. Graduates pursue careers or advanced study in areas such as social services, counseling, education, public policy, health professions, and research.

You Might Like This Program If...

- You are interested in working to improve the lives and wellness of individuals, families, and communities.
- You are passionate about working to reduce inequality, advocate for change, and improve well-being through policy, law, and advocacy.
- You are committed to developing a strong foundation of knowledge and skills to pursue medical school, psychiatry, occupational therapy, or accelerated nursing, physician assistant or other health professions programs.

- You are excited by developmental research, social program design, and non-profit or government program administration.
- You are eager to utilize flexible degree requirements to explore careers, pursue experiential learning opportunities, and develop your skills.