



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## NYSARH Announces 2025 Cohort of Research and Policy (RaP) Fellows

(GOWANDA, NY – DATE) – The New York State Association for Rural Health (NYSARH) is proud to introduce its **2025 cohort of Research and Policy (RaP) Fellows**—a group of emerging leaders committed to advancing rural health policy in New York State. This nine-month intensive fellowship is designed to develop thought leaders who can articulate a clear and compelling vision for rural New York, equipping them with the skills to research, analyze, and advocate for policies that support rural communities.

Throughout the program, fellows will collaborate with mentors from NYSARH’s Board of Directors and Policy Committee to research and develop both an issue brief and a policy brief on timely topics aligned with NYSARH’s legislative agenda. The first half of the fellowship focuses on in-depth research and issue analysis, while the second half transitions to policy development and advocacy work.

“This fellowship is about cultivating the next generation of rural health policy leaders,” said Alison Coates, MS, MBA, PhD(c), President of the NYSARH Board of Directors. “These talented individuals bring a diverse range of expertise and passion to the program, and we look forward to their contributions in shaping policies that enhance health and wellness in rural communities across New York.”

### Introducing the 2025 NYSARH RaP Fellows

- **Samantha Ballas** (*SUNY Upstate Medical University – Doctor of Medicine student, Rural Medicine Program*) Samantha is a medical student dedicated to addressing health disparities in rural communities, with research experience in public health, mental health, and firearm injury prevention.
- **Abby Duvall, MPH** (*The George Washington University – Master of Public Health, Global Health Policy*) Abby brings expertise in substance use policy and harm reduction, having

worked with SAMHSA, the CDC Foundation, and Truth Initiative on public health research and policy analysis.

- **Joshua Grove** (*Syracuse University – Ph.D. candidate in Sociology, specializing in Drugs & Society and Population Health*) Joshua’s research focuses on mental health, substance use, and rural-urban health disparities, with experience in public policy analysis and harm reduction strategies.
- **Grace Gugerty** (*SUNY Upstate Medical University – Doctor of Medicine student, Rural Medical Scholars Program*) Grace is an advocate for rural healthcare workforce development, with a background in public health research, opioid prevention education, and emergency medicine.
- **Sabrina Soto** (*Suffolk University – Master of Healthcare Administration student, Concentration in Quality & Patient Safety*) Sabrina is committed to improving healthcare access and patient outcomes, with experience in healthcare management, policy analysis, and rural maternal health disparities research.

### **A Fellowship with Real-World Impact**

Over the course of the program, fellows will not only develop in-depth policy insights but will also have the opportunity to engage with rural health stakeholders, attend policy meetings, and contribute directly to NYSARH’s advocacy efforts. If time and capacity allow, fellows may also develop leave-behind materials for NYSARH to use in policy discussions with legislators.

Fellows will be supported to participate in educational activities including the Rural Summit on Older Adults, the Public Health Partnership Conference and the Rural Health Symposium.

“The RaP Fellowship plays a vital role in strengthening rural health advocacy in New York State,” said Sara Wall Bollinger, Director for Strategic Development at NYSARH. “By mentoring emerging leaders and fostering their engagement in policy work, we are ensuring that the future of rural health is in capable and passionate hands.”

### **About the New York State Association for Rural Health (NYSARH)**

The New York State Association for Rural Health (NYSARH) is dedicated to improving the health and well-being of rural New Yorkers through advocacy, education, and collaboration. As a statewide organization, NYSARH works with health providers, community leaders, and policymakers to address the unique challenges facing rural communities. For more information, visit [www.nysarh.org](http://www.nysarh.org).