

# Meet the Fellow

## Kate Namey

**Host Laboratory:** Florida Bureau of Public Health Laboratories - Jacksonville, FL

**Degree of Study:** Bachelor's of Science in Health Science (Public Health)

**Graduation:** December 2024

**School:** University of North Florida

### What is your educational background?

I recently graduated from the University of North Florida (UNF) with a bachelor's in public health and a minor in applied ethics. I have been accepted into the MPH program and will begin classes in the Fall 2025 term.

### What brought you into laboratory science?

I worked in a university laboratory as a volunteer student laboratory assistant and wanted to learn more about the laboratory and how it functions in the public health realm. When it came time to select an internship as part of my degree program, I applied for an APHL internship at our local Bureau of Public Health Laboratory (BPHL). I have a passion for zoonotic and vector-borne disease research.

### How did you hear about the Public Health Laboratory Fellowship Program?

The program was recommended by my professor at UNF and by my mentor at the BPHL laboratory. I started as an intern and then went on to become a fellow.

### How did this fellowship match or exceed your expectations?

This fellowship has far exceeded my expectations - mostly because I didn't know what to expect. Being in the new Laboratory Operations and Support Services fellowship meant that I didn't have much to reference as to what those before me had done. But, I have thoroughly enjoyed the process and all of the experiential and learning opportunities that I have been afforded through this process. I have been able to network with scientists, laboratorians, and operations specialists whose skills may be very similar to my own or vastly different and both exposures have been so infinitely beneficial.

### Tell us what you learned from your mentor.

My mentor, Amanda, has been one of the greatest parts of my experience. She has taught me how to manage my time wisely and has helped me form lasting connections with people in a variety of roles within the public health sector. She has been there to answer every question I have had and has been my No. 1 supporter.

### Tell us about your project assignments/laboratory roles.

I am currently working on rebuilding and enhancing relationships in the state of Florida to improve the influenza and respiratory surveillance network. I have contacted and brought medical providers and other submitters onboard to increase geographic representation for our state. I have had the opportunity



to connect with our state, territorial, and regional epidemiologists as well as other laboratory and public health officials to help educate and foster the needed connections to support this goal. Being based in a very busy virology section, I have had a lot of exposure to the day-to-day operations of the lab and have learned how to best support the lab when interacting with other organizations.

### How has your fellowship experience inspired you?

This fellowship experience has greatly changed and shaped my view on the public health sector as a whole and has opened my eyes to how many different roles are needed to make the system work. Learning how to support and manage a variety of ages, experiences, personalities, and support needs for an overall (and very important) common goal has been very inspiring. I hope to find a permanent home in this system in a role similar to my current role - which I did not know existed or was possible prior to my fellowship.

### How would you describe the APHL Fellowship to other students?

I tell other students often that the APHL Fellowship is a life-changing opportunity, but you only get out of it what you put into it. If you put in the time and take advantage of all the training and opportunities that are afforded to you, it can be an experience unlike any other. There are so many opportunities to learn and grow without the fear of failure or having to go it alone. The program staff and mentors have been invaluable in making sure that we are seen, heard, and supported.

### Aside from the laboratory and the science skills and knowledge, did you gain any other beneficial life experiences?

This professional development funds have allowed me to travel and attend conferences that I likely otherwise would not have been able to take part in. Being able to meet people in person from a variety of backgrounds and to travel (across the country) has been very beneficial. This program has also afforded me a certain level of confidence because it is okay (and expected) that I don't know everything, but I know who I can contact to find answers or solutions.