

Aitalohi Amaize

AY 2017-18 All-S.T.A.R. Fellow

School of Public Health

Department of Health Services Administration

2nd year Graduate Student, RA



Translation of research to policy and practice motivates my pursuit of a PhD in Health Services Administration. As a former emergency department and forensic nurse, I saw how slowly research informed our practice, often carrying a 5-year lag. Upon acceptance to UMD, a graduate assistantship (GA) position assuaged my anxieties around how I would afford my studies as a part-time student.

My department chair thoughtfully assigned me to the Maryland Health Care Commission's Rural Health Study, having done qualitative research during my MPH capstone. While my background is in urban populations of color and I knew little about the challenges facing rural Maryland, the prospect of working with a multidisciplinary group of SPH faculty and experts from the NORC Walsh Center for Rural Health immediately piqued my interest. The project dovetailed perfectly with my interests in care management, healthcare access, and most of all, using research to inform policy and practice.

This GA position has allowed me to see firsthand how my training as a researcher can help solve real-world public health problems. I have observed necessary compromises when rules and expectations of research and practice are at odds. Furthermore, I have gained tangible skills like navigating the IRB process, coordinating multiple focus groups on a tight timeline, and leading a team in data analysis. Most of all, I have witnessed how multidisciplinary research can break down the siloes in public health, and I am so grateful for the ways this GA position has enhanced my first year at UMD.