



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: September 15, 2020

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## **NYSACHO AWARDED \$200,000 TO SUPPORT RURAL HEALTH DEPARTMENTS' RESPONSE TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

### **Funding Provided by the New York State Health Foundation**

(Albany, New York) The New York State Association of County Health Officials (NYSACHO) today announced it has been awarded a grant of \$200,000 which will be disseminated to local health departments serving rural communities during the COVID-19 pandemic. The funding was provided to NYSACHO by the New York State Health Foundation (NYSHealth), a private, statewide organization dedicated to improving the health of all New Yorkers.

Approximately 12% of New York residents live in rural communities and face numerous health disparities. These residents are typically older and have lower incomes than those who live in urban areas, increasing the burden on rural public health agencies and healthcare systems. In addition, rural areas face unique challenges due to their geographic isolation, including health care provider shortages, lack of adequate resources, and few community partners.

All 58 local health departments across New York have been engaged on the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic since its inception, providing a multitude of critical response services including: epidemiological investigations; contact tracing; monitoring of suspected cases; providing or linking communities to testing; and enforcing isolation and quarantine protocols. These population-health focused interventions have had a direct, positive impact on the healthcare system by decreasing hospitalizations and emergency room visits.

The funding provided by NYSHealth will be directed by NYSACHO to support these and other COVID-19 response activities in select rural counties with populations of less than 80,000, where poverty and food insecurity rates are higher than the state average.

Dr. Kevin D. Watkins, Public Health Director in Cattaraugus County and President of NYSACHO, said: "We are tremendously grateful to NYSHealth for their support and partnership. Rural communities face numerous challenges that too often place barriers between residents and critical services. These grant dollars will be incredibly helpful in supporting local health departments in these areas that often are the only bridge connecting residents to the care and support they need to stay healthy and secure."

The funding is currently being distributed to eligible county health departments by NYSACHO via an RFP process. For more information, please visit: [www.nysacho.org](http://www.nysacho.org).

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