

Student Spotlight – Julia Dudley

Julia Dudley will be graduating in May 2023 with her Master in Public Health degree from the Muskie School of Public Service. She grew up in Rome, Maine, a small rural town with a population of 1,148. She became an emancipated minor at age 15 and graduated high school early to join the workforce. She went on to attend the University of Maine at Farmington, where she earned a BA in Biology with a minor in Health and Medicine. She is a first-generation college student. Her professional interests are to work with state and local agencies to interpret health-related data associated with birth outcomes in rural areas in order to identify and reduce disparities between populations and improve overall healthcare inequality.

How long have you been at USM?

I started the Master of Public Health program at USM in September 2021 and will be graduating this coming May.

What made you choose USM?

I grew up in central Maine and moved to the southern part of the state in 2020 after completing my undergraduate degree. I had plans to pursue clinical medicine, but for many reasons my plans changed and I found myself interested in population health. The MPH program at USM offered exactly what I was looking for academically and provided ample resources for post-graduation success.

What made you decide on your major?

With a background in biology, I wanted to obtain an advanced degree that would complement and expand on the knowledge I already had. I knew the MPH program would let me stay in the "health" field and would give me a broad set of skills that would be useful in many types of public health jobs.

Anything you would like to mention about your major or any classes or faculty that you've enjoyed?

I've really enjoyed my time working for Dr. Kate Ahrens as a graduate research assistant (GA). My main focus as a GA was analyzing maternal and child health data for Maine's Medicaid population, specifically looking at women with substance use during pregnancy and their babies. The knowledge, experience, and professional connections I have gained because of this position are invaluable.

What plans do you have after graduation?

While working as a GA, I was introduced to a state-facilitated program, called MaineMOM, aimed to reduce barriers to care related to opioid use disorder for pregnant and postpartum women. I became an intern with MaineMOM in September 2022 and have focused on quality improvement, program evaluation, and data management. After graduation, I will be moving into a full-time position with MaineMOM. I am beyond excited for this opportunity and am confident my time at USM has prepared me for this next adventure.