



SERVICE LEARNING AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT THROUGH HIGHER EDUCATION

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AU RURAL HEALTH INITIATIVE: BUILDING HEALTHY RURAL COMMUNITIES THROUGH STRATEGIC COLLABORATION

ABSTRACT:

The Auburn University Rural Health Initiative, in partnership with Alabama Extension, bridges critical healthcare gaps in rural communities. By leveraging Extension's deep local networks and the University's academic resources, this collaboration delivers needed healthcare and tailored prevention and education programming to rural communities. Participants will learn the portals and barriers to success that complementary partnerships face in providing community centered health and wellness programming and in increasing utilization of and access to healthcare.

THEMATIC FOCUS:

Blockage and Clearance: Physical, infrastructural, financial, or organizational barriers or portals to community engagement.

Floods and Droughts: Too much of one thing, not enough of another. How complimentary partnership can fill the gaps.

BIO:

Anna Beth Gandy is a graduate student pursuing a M.Ed. in Clinical Mental Health Counseling at Auburn University. She currently serves as a graduate assistant with the Auburn University Rural Health Initiative, where she collaborates with rural communities across Alabama to identify and address pressing mental health needs. Her work focuses on increasing access to mental health education, resources, and services in underserved areas, with a commitment to promoting wellness through community engagement and culturally responsive care. Anna Beth is passionate about advancing mental health equity and aims to continue serving rural populations through both clinical work and advocacy.