



## 2021 Outstanding Young Alumna

### Nicole Alexander-Scott, MD '01

Nicole Alexander-Scott, MD '01, MPH has been the director of the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH) since April 2015, responsible for a staff of more than 470 employees and a budget of \$170 million, both of which increased significantly during the COVID pandemic response. Dr. Alexander-Scott brings tremendous background to this position from her work as a specialist in infectious diseases for children and adults and from her experience in academia as an associate professor of pediatrics, medicine, and public health (with a focus on health services, policy, and practice).

Born and raised in Brooklyn, New York, Alexander-Scott attended Cornell University, majoring in human development and family studies. That foundation directed her medical studies at Upstate Medical University, where she remained interested in the



**“Eighty percent of what makes someone healthy happens outside of the examination room. Covid has really nailed down the need to put resources and steps in place to improve determinants of health.”**

human condition and behavior from the very youngest to the very oldest patients. As a medical student, she was recognized with several scholarships, including the James L. Potts Medical Principles Award, the Joseph J. Gadbaw, MD 12/’43 and Ann Gadbaw Scholarship, and the Medical Alumni Scholarship Award.

Alexander-Scott completed a combined internal medicine/pediatrics residency at University Hospital at Stony Brook, followed by a four-year combined adult/pediatric infectious diseases fellowship at The Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University, where she developed an interest in public policy, particularly relating to HIV testing in pregnant women. Her efforts led to a new state law in 2007 that made testing for HIV a routine component of prenatal screenings. She went on to earn a master’s in public health from Brown University in 2011.

In 2009, Alexander-Scott joined the Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University as an associate professor with appointments in both the Department of Medicine and Department of Pediatrics, and as an attending physician at Rhode Island Hospital and Hasbro Children’s Hospital and as consulting physician at Women and Infants’ Hospital, all in Providence. She also served as a consultant to RIDOH, working with the Division of Community, Family Health, and Equity; Division of Infectious Diseases and Epidemiology; and Office of HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis, STDs, and TB.

In 2015, Alexander-Scott was appointed director of RIDOH by Governor Gina Raimondo. The position holds a five-year term, and she



**Alexander-Scott discusses the state’s response to the coronavirus pandemic during a briefing at the State House in April 2020.**

was reappointed in 2020. Under her leadership, RIDOH has established three leading priorities: addressing the socioeconomic and environmental determinants of health; eliminating disparities of health and promoting health equity; and ensuring access to quality health services for all Rhode Islanders, including the state’s vulnerable populations. She has been heralded for her leadership during the Covid-19 pandemic. Rhode Island emerged early on as a national leader in per-capita testing for the virus and is among states with the highest rates of vaccination.

Alexander-Scott is board certified in pediatrics, internal medicine, pediatric infectious diseases, and adult infectious diseases. She has published and served as an invited speaker on varied topics related to public health. She serves on numerous Rhode Island state committees and has been a member of

the Reforming States Group of the Milbank Memorial Fund, a bipartisan group of state health policy leaders from both the executive and legislative branches. She is a member of the board of directors for the Association for State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO), for which she has served in numerous capacities. As president of ASTHO from 2018-2019, Alexander-Scott established a President’s Challenge on “Building Healthy and Resilient Communities,” which was subsequently adopted as a permanent focus.

Alexander-Scott has been recognized by numerous local and national organizations for her commitment to health equity, including Grow Smart Rhode Island, the Rhode Island Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the Kresge Foundation.



**Dr. Alexander-Scott addresses reporters about the coronavirus pandemic in mid-March 2020, before daily briefings were moved to the Rhode Island State House and held remotely.**