

Joseph M. Kanter, MD, MPH

Chief Executive Officer

Association of State and Territorial Health Officials

Joseph M. Kanter, MD, MPH, is a dynamic and experienced public health leader with a wealth of expertise in public health promotion, state and local governmental administration, and health advocacy. He assumed the role of ASTHO's CEO in the spring of 2024 with an agenda to advance the organization's mission of providing essential support to state and territorial health departments, ensuring the vitality of public health programs and workforce, and championing policies that enable optimal health for all.

Prior to joining ASTHO, Kanter served as state health officer for Louisiana, leading the state's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and providing medical direction to a department of 7,000 employees. Under his leadership, Louisiana received national recognition for expansion and optimization of acute care resources in the early months of the pandemic, promotion of protective measures at the community level, and effective public communication strategies. In addition to oversight and enforcement of the state's sanitary code, Kanter provided direction on issues relating to programmatic implementation, quality assurance, affordability and accessibility of care, emergency preparedness, environmental hazards, infection control, chronic disease, and health resiliency. He is an experienced crisis manager and led the state's health response to Hurricanes Laura, Delta, Zeta, and Ida, the 2023 wildfires, and Mississippi River saltwater intrusion.



As director of health for the City of New Orleans, Kanter designed and implemented the city's comprehensive opioid mitigation strategy, which included reducing barriers to naloxone, expanding access to addiction treatment services, engaging in innovative partnerships with law enforcement, and initiating a multi-sector initiative to reduce the stigma of addictive disorders. Prior to this role, he served as medical director for the city's Health Care for the Homeless clinic.

Kanter received his medical doctorate and master's in public health from Tulane University, and his undergraduate degree from Northwestern University. He is a board-certified emergency physician, a clinical assistant professor of medicine at both LSU Health Sciences Center and Tulane University School of Medicine, and a former U.S. Fulbright Scholar.