

Insights

NICHQ Employee Spotlight: Judith Gooding

In celebration of over 20 years improving health outcomes for children, we're sharing insights, memories and goals from the NICHQ team.



Full name and title: Judith S. Gooding, Chief Operating Officer

Years with NICHQ: 4

How has your background/experiences led you to join a national children's health organization?

I've spent 25 years at maternal and child health organizations, and the 10 years before I came to NICHQ I administered nationwide programs as Vice President of Signature Programs at the March of Dimes. I was passionate about the work I led, including a community program to prevent prematurity, a hospital-partnered program to support families whose babies are in neonatal intensive care, and a mobile health care program developed in response to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita to bring care to pregnant women in the immediate aftermath and for three years after those devastating hurricanes.

I've worked with several other health and human services organizations where I focused primarily on organizational effectiveness and strategic planning and had a wonderful opportunity to work as Vice President of Impact at United Way of Stamford, Connecticut. It was a joy and inspiration to really understand the work of the community agencies in the city where I lived and raised my children.

My personal experience of having a baby with severe respiratory distress in 1991 significantly deepened my commitment to maternal and child health. I saw first-hand the care you get when you know what to ask for, when you are fully informed, when you have ample insurance, and when you are able to be an advocate for your child in an urgent situation. My baby was cared for, treated, moved to another hospital, and got the intensive care he needed, and he survived and then thrived. I deeply internalized what happens when families do not have or receive what I did; their babies may not get the care they need, may not be transferred to the higher level hospital, may not get immediate and urgent attention, and they may die in their early days of life or may not thrive in their first year. This knowledge drives my concern for equity in all aspects of life, especially in health care, and more specifically in the early days, months and years of life when care matters so much.

How does your role support NICHQ quality improvement projects?

My experiences and passions have evolved together over three decades in public health and I'm enthusiastic about bringing those to NICHQ and to our work in quality improvement and supporting systems and states in other ways as well. NICHQ is nationally recognized for our work in partnering with families and communities in everything we do. I love that. Even as COO, I can contribute to family partnerships in projects and the organization (two Board members bring the importance of family partnership to our organization at the highest level). I assist with the scale and spread of programs that are proven to be effective; this is the purpose of several of our QI projects. Creating and ensuring a sustainable business model at NICHQ is also important to my role in the organization and is critical to our ongoing success.

Which NICHQ projects do you work on?

I'm currently project director for [PCORI Disseminating Results: Missed Sickle Cell Disease Clinic Appointments and the Health Belief Model](#) to share results of a study about missed sickle cell disease appointments. NICHQ interviewed adults with sickle cell disease, caregivers, and providers to find reasons and solutions for missed appointments and applied that qualitative information to sharing and disseminating solutions that can be sustained and spread.

I'm also principal investigator for the [Sickle Cell Disease Treatment Demonstration Regional Collaborative Program National Coordinating Center](#). In that role, I provide leadership and direction, working closely with the Health Resources and Services Administration program staff and the NICHQ team. NICHQ is the National Coordinating Center and uses the NICHQ Collaboratory to support the Regional Coordinating Centers in gathering quality improvement data from sites in their regions.

Earlier this year, I led the [Missouri Safe Sleep Strategic Plan](#) project to guide the Missouri Safe Sleep Coalition, funded by the Children's Trust Fund, in developing a comprehensive, measurable and inclusive strategic plan to reduce sleep-related infant deaths with a focus and measures related to reducing disparities in infant death in the state. In St Louis, a Black baby is four times more likely to die from sleep related death than a white baby. Reducing all sleep-related infant death is important and simultaneously reducing disparities is urgent. I was impressed by the Missouri Team, from CTF and the health department and the social services department – all were committed, thoughtful and fully engaged in the work – and they are now

implementing their 3-year plan. I look forward to hearing the results!

What are you most proud of from your time with NICHQ?

Ah, this is an easy one today...I'm all about the way the entire NICHQ team has been nimble in the face of the COVID-19 crisis. To ensure organizational effectiveness, we'd been prepping and equipping our team to work from home with expertise and relative ease prior to the pandemic. That's made our shift to working from home much more facile. Our flexibility in work schedules supports flexible schedules, as parents and others take on home schooling and other activities while simultaneously delivering for NICHQ! Also, NICHQ navigated the Families First Coronavirus Response Act and the CARES Act early on and kept staff informed of options and prepared for those options to be taken.

Our Marketing and Digital Strategy team has been impressively nimble in ensuring that our constituents, viewers and readers are getting the information most important to them as early as possible, as the COVID-19 situation impacts every project NICHQ has undertaken. Providing clear, engaging, evidence-based information on our website and social media has been a hallmark of NICHQ's response.

And most important, our project teams have been incredibly nimble in integrating COVID-19 information and response into all projects, such as the [Florida Children's Medical Services Learning and Action Network](#) offering COVID-19 preparation as the content for a quality improvement learning session, responding to the needs of the systems and hospital partners. Across all projects, our staff has been incredibly flexible with work plans: replacing in-person meetings with virtual learning sessions; shifting key project components to later in the year; and replacing second and third quarter plans and content with COVID-19 support, technical assistance, and programming.

What are your goals for NICHQ's future?

To truly walk the walk of the NICHQ Journey Toward Equity. To become a leader among national nonprofits in equity: diversifying our own workforce, combating racism, facing implicit biases and shining a light on the impact of inequities on the health our country's children...a light that is bright enough to change minds and actions.