Insights

NICHQ Intern Spotlight: Lyndsay Brooks

by Lucy Burzynski, NICHQ intern

July 27, 2022

Lyndsay Brooks (she/her) is a 2022 summer intern on NICHQ's Marketing and Communications Team. Originally from Davidsonville, MD, Lyndsay is now a Master's of Public Health student at Boston University (BU) studying Health, Policy, and Law and Maternal and Child Health (MCH). Lyndsay brings with her a background in public health, Medicaid policy, and pediatric healthcare. When she is not studying or working, she enjoys baking, knitting, and hiking. This summer, as a part of her Personal Quality Improvement Project, Lyndsay has also been training for a 5K.

All NICHQ interns get the opportunity to participate in a weekly Quality Improvement (QI) course. Throughout the duration of their internship, interns develop a personal aim and apply QI methodology to their Personal Quality Improvement Project.

What brought you to the field of public health?

I originally got into the healthcare field because I worked in the pediatric emergency room back in high school. I went to college as a pre-med student planning to become a pediatrician. As I moved through my pre-med coursework, I started to think medicine might not be for me. I feel like so much of medicine is putting a Band-Aid on a bullet hole – there are a lot of structural issues at play. So, I thought, "Let's think of something else." That "something else" ended up being public health.

After becoming a Global Public Health major at the University of Virginia, I connected with my advisor, who had previously worked as a lobbyist for Congress. She had a background in health policy and had done a lot of research on Medicaid policy. That really interested me and ultimately led to my final undergrad thesis, which I did on the impact of state-based policies on maternal mortality rates. That really made me passionate about policy. I feel like a lot of the good

Source URL: https://nichq.org/insight/nichq-intern-spotlight-lyndsay-brooks

change we need in this world is going to come from policy.

What MCH issue are you most passionate about?

It would definitely be maternal health. Specifically, I am most passionate about the one-year period after birth. I feel like a lot of attention goes to the mortality and morbidity that occurs during pregnancy and birth and we often lose sight of what happens beyond those periods. With things like substance use disorder and maternal postpartum depression, the period after birth is a really important time to provide support.

My main passion project is postpartum Medicaid expansion. That was the main takeaway from my undergrad thesis. I concluded that more states need to expand their postpartum Medicaid coverage. And then six months later, I actually saw that happen. To me, it showed that actual change is possible. It showed that there are lots of advocates in this field. You are not working alone on an uphill battle. Change does matter and people are doing it!

What projects are you working on this summer at NICHQ?

I am currently working on writing internal policy statements for NICHQ around some potentially controversial policy issues like reproductive justice, gun violence, gender-affirming care, sickle cell disease, and other rare diseases. That way, when relevant conversations and events happen, NICHQ has an established response and stance on the issue and people from NICHQ can feel free to respond to issues in the moment. It has been really interesting so far to think about all of the issues you might forget relate back to children's health. Once you dig deep, you see how so many potentially controversialpolicy issues all tie together and are relevant to NICHQ's work.

I am also working on a news monitoring service for when maternal and child health news comes up, so that we can respond to news more quickly. This will allow NICHQ leadership to know what is going on and decide whether or not NICHQ should make a statement on the news. We want to be out in front and the news monitoring service allows for that.

I am also really excited to work on a longer written piece on reproductive justice. It feels very, very timely now and it is also one of my personal passions. I don't really pursue reproductive justice work much in a professional arena, so it is interesting to see how that can play out and the insights different people at NICHQ have. Hopefully someone reads my piece and gets some comfort or knowledge out of it.

Who are you most excited to learn from at NICHQ?

I had a really interesting meeting with Camie Berardi where I started to learn about all of the policy letters and issues that NICHQ, as an organization, has signed on to. It is really interesting to me to see NICHQ put their name to important topics when I would not consider NICHQ a traditional "advocacy organization." I love learning about how even organizations without a strong policy lens can still help contribute to policy changes.

What are your career aspirations for after your degree?

Eventually, I want to be a policy consultant. My dream would be to work as a consultant for a state-run Medicaid agency. I feel like now, especially with the reversal of Roe v. Wade, that so much of health policy lives at the state level. There is so much change that can be made. States are more likely to take on a new project or program once they see that it has been successful in another state. There is room to make big impact there. Historically, a lot of good programs have come from a single state adopting a new policy and then other states following and creating a new norm.

How do you feel your work this summer at NICHQ is helping move you towards those goals?

Policy consulting involves a lot of seeing what is out there and adapting a proposal to make it better. Writing the internal policy statements has given me an opportunity to see what kind of statements are out there from peer agencies with similar values and use their statements to think about how we can shape our policy statement on a given topic. That has been really beneficial to me. I also know that in policy work it is really important to consider where you stand personally on an issue and where the agency or organization you work for stands. This project has given me an opportunity to become familiar with that reality and learn to separate my personal beliefs from things and advocating for the agency given what they are comfortable saying.