

## Insights

# NICHQ Intern Spotlight: Madeline D'Onfro

by Macy Parakh, NICHQ intern

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*Madeline D'Onfro (she/her) is an intern on NICHQ's HNCC Project this*

*Summer. After growing up in Massachusetts, Madeline spent seven years living in Boise, Idaho and has now returned to the Northeast to pursue her Master in Public Health at Boston University. She is concentrating her studies in Community Assessment and Program Design and Maternal and Child Health. Madeline's Summer QI project is to increase her average running mileage. In her free time Madeline enjoys hiking, cycling, and any other activity that allows her to be outdoors!*

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 moved to Boise, Idaho through [AmeriCorps](#) in 2014 and spent seven years working in different community non-profits —focusing on gender violence prevention and homelessness and housing services. There were many moments throughout my work experiences that pointed me towards public health. I was able to work alongside public health evaluators that helped me understand the different ways data can be leveraged for improving services and care. I was also able to participate in various learning collaboratives across the state and Northwest region which introduced me to systems-thinking and the power of regional collaboration in effecting wide-ranging progress. All of my experiences working at the community-level led me to public health.

### **What MCH issue are you most passionate about?**

I'm really passionate about early childhood and the impact that can be had by promoting protective factors among young children. My other work experiences throughout graduate school have focused on opioid use disorder (OUD), which is another issue I'm really passionate about.

### **What drove you to intern at NICHQ?**

During my time working in Boise, I participated in a quality improvement learning collaborative and when I first learned of NICHQ's work, their efforts resonated with my experiences. Additionally, I had come across their work through my research on opioid use during pregnancy — it all converged when I saw they were offering an internship program. It was really exciting because the more I read about the work that NICHQ does, the more I thought it seemed like exactly the type of work I'd love to do in my career.

### **What projects are you working on this Summer at NICHQ?**

I am working on a team supporting the Hemoglobinopathies National Coordinating Center (HNCC). The HNCC works with sickle cell disease (SCD) treatment demonstration program grantees, across five national regions, in their provision of care to patients with SCD. I've been able to participate in a range of different activities throughout the last few weeks to support this work. Currently, I'm working on a report that summarizes the wide breadth of activities that have been planned or are occurring across the regions over the last five years and next week I'll be supporting an event where we'll be bringing all the awardees together to share updates and learnings. It's been an incredible opportunity to learn more about sickle cell disease and the impressive network of providers, organizations, care systems, and individuals doing this important work.

### **Who are you most excited to learn from at NICHQ?**

Honestly, every single person on the NICHQ team that I've been able to work with has been so exciting to learn from. One thing that's really reaffirming and grounding for me is seeing how everyone on the team continually centers the patient experience, even as we're often working at a really high-level. One NICHQ staff member, on my first day, said something to the effect of "they don't care what we know until they know that we care" when referring broadly to our efforts. I really feel like that ethos has been exemplified as I've watched the NICHQ team do their work in a manner that is rooted in care and compassion.

### **What are your career aspirations for after your degree?**

There are so many directions I can imagine going! I am interested in working at the systems level to support local systems of care. Whether at the municipal or national level, I'd love to support efforts to ensure that programs are collaborating strategically and that they have the data and the resources they need to best serve communities. I'm also really interested in program evaluation and leveraging data to ensure that programming is effective and rooted in equity. I look forward to continuing to explore where my career will take me next.

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

My work with NICHQ this summer has helped me work toward my career goals in so many ways. I've been able to see what it looks like to hold patients and populations at the center while working at the systemic-level. It's been an incredible learning experience to see what it takes to do systems-level coordination and quality improvement while managing relationships with all different partners across all regions. While there are real challenges that come along with this work, it truly feels so fulfilling and I'm so grateful for the opportunity to learn from this impressive team of people.