

Insights

NICHQ Employee Spotlight: Jey Weisgerber

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Jey Weisgerber,
Director of Communications and Digital Strategy

Full name and title: Jey Weisgerber, Director of Communications and Digital Strategy

Years with NICHQ: 3 years

How have your background and experiences led to you joining a national children's health organization?

I spent nearly a decade volunteering for an LGBTQIA+ organization back in the Midwest. Through that time, I worked on creating curriculum for youth-serving professionals and facilitated a lot of workshops for social work grad students, medical professionals, and educators. What really brought me to NICHQ was the mission that every child achieves their optimal health. And I think seeing how MCH as a whole could benefit from being more inclusive, not just for queer and gender-nonconforming folks who might give birth, but also for fathers and other partners who are parents or caregivers and for kids who are trans or intersex – really bringing in that specific layer of intersectionality that was built through my community organizing work.

What does your role as Director of Communications and Digital Strategy entail, and how do you bring your past experiences to your work now?

From a skill standpoint, having a professional communications background that includes design, journalism, community organizing, and marketing professional services – it all comes together for a nice mix within the maternal child health field, especially with an organization like NICHQ. There are a few different components to communications and digital strategy work: I support the team so that we can complete contracted deliverables for projects and add value along the way. But we also support NICHQ's goal of speaking boldly about health equity and systems change and really infusing that into all areas of our work. The digital strategy component can be a lot of behind-the-scenes things. For example, improving our email or communication systems or working with lots of data and reporting. And then also thinking about how NICHQ can leverage technology to the benefit of our mission.

Are there any NICHQ projects or deliverables that have been particularly impactful for you to work on?

One that comes to mind is the Congressional Report in 2021 related to sickle cell disease work across the country. Seeing the efforts of all the regional coordinating centers, a lot of what was working for them, what was important to them and the gaps in care that they saw. It was complex deliverable, but it felt like we were getting something actionable in front of the decision makers who really can affect change, like health care access for folks all across the country. That felt significant, in terms of changing systems, because so much of our work is done at that quality improvement level, small-scale changes that we hope make a big improvement. It was also a way to get close to the front lines of the work – through the regional coordinating centers that serve folks in the community. It allowed me to really see how the work NICHQ does has an impact on communities. Then, within sickle cell disease, thinking about how many people that affects and what groups of folks and all the disparities there, for folks of African-American descent, and then you transpose that onto existing disparities and lack of access to care, and you can really see how changing the way that legislation responds to and supports rare diseases like sickle cell can have positive compounding outcomes for people's health.

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

This will connect back to the question about some of my experiences and how it led me to NICHQ, because I would say it's our equity work, and how it's becoming more well-rounded. It's strongly rooted in anti-racism work, which is very appropriate, but part of my personal goal coming here is to expand how we think of that equity work into differences of gender identity and how that can impact our experiences. So really, the way at NICHQ that we're promoting and continue to promote gender-affirming care as safe and evidence-based, because we know it saves lives. And kids everywhere deserve the positive health outcomes that are associated with accessing that kind of care. I'm proud that we continue to follow the American Academy of Pediatrics and other leading science-based organizations about the importance of this. When you identify outside the binary, your experience with care is different throughout your whole life – as a child, and then as your reproductive health becomes a focus, there are all these other considerations. Then when you consider that for people who identify outside the binary, it's a lifetime of different experiences that you can have and struggle accessing care throughout your

life. It's not just what's best for our kids to support their gender identity, it's all the way to folks who do not identify as "mothers" seeking care, focusing on their birthing experience. There are many facets throughout maternal and child health that we can look at related to gender equity.

Looking ahead, what is one goal you hope to accomplish within your role?

Our team is looking forward to working on a new NICHQ.org website. We're hoping to start this summer and have some tangible results within a year. That's a huge opportunity for any communicator, to be able to look at not just what we share with the public, but from deep down on that systems-process level: How can we really maximize this for the organization and all the wonderful projects that we help support? I'm also looking forward to NICHQ continuing to have a really bold equity voice. We've worked so hard to infuse it into everything we say and do that now it cannot be extracted. We cannot talk about our work or maternal child health without talking about equity and that's how it should be. I'm really proud of that. I'm also looking forward to how we continue operationalizing and considering equity in everything we do.