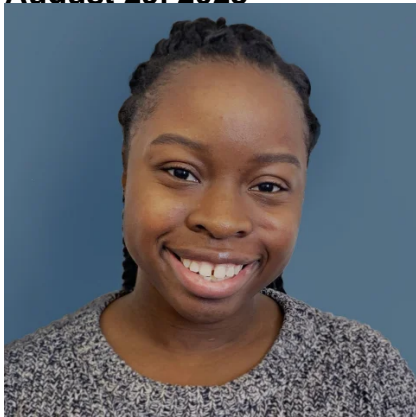


Insights

NICHQ Employee Spotlight: Danisha Charles

August 29, 2023



Full name and title: Danisha Charles, MPH, Project Manager

Time with NICHQ: 3 years

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

I have a master's in public health, but also previously worked at an institute for clinical research as well as health policy studies, which I really enjoyed, but I wanted to dive into something different in terms of initiatives. After meeting a colleague from NICHQ and learning more about the organization, I was encouraged to take the next step to join the organization. In terms of children's health, I've always been passionate about advocating for children's health, especially in low-income communities and those experiencing various health disparities. After researching NICHQ, I found it was the perfect fit. So far, I've been on four different projects, all contributing to the betterment of children's health, and I cannot be happier.

What does your role as a project manager with the Supporting Healthy Start Performance Project entail, and how do you bring your past experiences to your work now?

The great part about being a project manager in a project like the [Supporting Healthy Start Performance Project](#) is that you get the best of both worlds, being involved with both management and content. I've worked on different projects and participated in various activities, including many fatherhood-focused activities, some breastfeeding, mental and behavioral health,

and others. In terms of being a project manager, we help facilitate the completion of a lot of deliverables, and it's nice to know that all the work we're doing contributes to Healthy Start, both as the national initiative and on the community level

My past experiences have really shaped how I approach different circumstances and challenges that our Healthy Start grantees are facing. Roadblocks can come at any phase of the project – at the government level, at the state level, or even the community level. With my background, I'm able to better understand some of the challenges that arise and contribute to solutions.

With the HS TASC, are there any projects or deliverables that have been particularly impactful to produce?

We are grateful to be able to sponsor grantees to attend different conferences and receive various training. These opportunities, or scholarships, as we call them in the Healthy Start Technical Assistance and Service Center (HS TASC), are trainings and certification programs that help strengthen their skills as Healthy Start staff and provide better care to their Healthy Start clients. I enjoy working to help grantees participate in these scholarship programs, including a certified lactation counseling program or CLC.

What are you most proud of from your time here at NICHQ?

We've created a ton of artifacts that they can take away both as staff and also take away as professionals in the maternal and child health space. That includes breastfeeding guides, various cohort deliverables where they are sharing nuggets of information and gems that they've co-created as a cohort through community engagement, fatherhood resources and materials, recruitment and retention strategies, and so much more. I'm very proud to have been involved in the development of many of these materials.

However, I am most proud of the advancements I've made personally as a professional in the public health space, as well as the connections I've made with different subject matter experts and members of partnering organizations. I believe one of the best parts of this job is that the only way to make it work is through collaboration with others. And with that, you learn a lot about different initiatives they have going on. You learn about organizations you've probably never heard of, smaller organizations, larger organizations, and organizations led by minorities, whether that be women or BIPOC owners. It's great to know that they're out there, but also all that they're doing great work we can contribute to. Collaborating with a variety of partners has also helped me better engage with our grantees and strengthen my skills as a project manager in the public health field.

Looking ahead, what is one goal you're excited to accomplish with the Healthy Start team this year?

In the fifth year of the project's grant cycle with the SHSPP team, we're speaking a lot about sustainability and a lot about planning for the future. I'm looking forward to brainstorming new strategies around sustainability as well as other new and exciting activities for Healthy Start grantees as their technical assistance and support center. I'm really excited for what's to come.