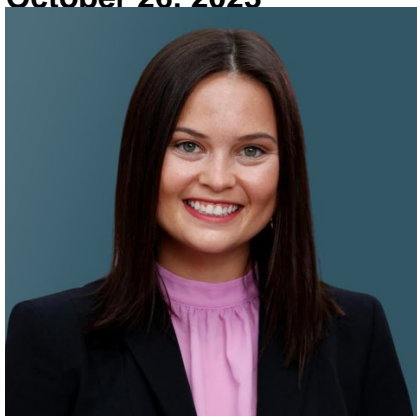


## Insights

# NICHQ Employee Spotlight: Callie Rowland, MPH

October 26, 2023



**Full name and title:** Callie Rowland, MPH

**Time with NICHQ:** 1 year

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

Like many, my path to maternal and child health has been a bit meandering. I was working toward becoming a clinician during undergrad when I had an internship in the Housing and Patient Services Department at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis. As I supported families undergoing treatment at St. Jude, I realized just how many factors play into overall familial health and well-being. I also experienced what it was like to work for an incredibly mission-driven organization where when you walk into work each day, you can feel that everyone is working towards the same goal.

After graduating, I decided to spend a year as an AmeriCorps Vista at the Virginia Department of Social Services Home Office in Richmond, VA. There, I dipped my toe into all things state government, learning the nuts and bolts of state government systems and the different entities. In my role as a Vista, I supported the local Department of Social Services and their work to best support Virginia families affected by substance use disorder. Once again, I saw how many factors contribute to individual and familial holistic health. It was there I learned about things like social determinants of health, the mother-infant dyad, and so many of the concepts we talk about in MCH. Most importantly, I learned about the dangers of stigma, bias, and health inequities.

I knew I needed to learn more, so I pursued a Master of Public Health in MCH from UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health, which ultimately led me to NICHQ. When searching for my first job out of grad school, I knew I wanted to work to affect change in the system, serving all mothers and children, and to work for an organization working to create more equitable systems, and that's how I landed here.

**What does your role as a Project Manager entail, and how do you bring your past experiences to your current work?**

I joke with my family and friends that I'm not even quite sure how to describe what my day-to-day looks like, because as a project manager, many of us at NICHQ would say you step into a jack-of-all-trades role. Some days, I'm working with our Communications and Digital Strategy team to disseminate mass communications to Perinatal Quality Collaboratives (PQCs) or plan out social media posts for the National Network of Perinatal Quality Collaboratives social media channels. On other days, I'm working with our Department of Applied Research and Evaluation colleagues to program surveys and evaluate project activities, which brings in some of the research work that I did in grad school.

Most days, I'm working on project reporting, scheduling meetings, and writing up notes and agendas for various meetings, whether those are internal or external or with different stakeholder groups. Also, I put on an occasional technical assistance call. As a project manager, no task is too big or too small, and I'm grateful for my project team, who in one year of working on this project, have put a lot of trust in me and given me autonomy to also work on strategic conversations and initiatives that relate to the project.

**NICHQ currently serves as the national coordinating center for the National Network of Perinatal Quality Collaboratives (NNPQC), as a PM working on this initiative, are there any projects or deliverables that have been particularly impactful?**

One initiative that I've enjoyed was launching four PQC-led affinity groups in areas that we learned from the PQCs were pain points, or areas that could benefit from additional brainstorming, troubleshooting, and connection with peers. The four areas these Affinity Groups work in are data, business, improvement methods, and patient and family engagement. They meet on varied schedules and serve as a place and a platform for connection and even troubleshooting. We believe these groups are a great way to connect the dots, for PQCs to not only work through shared challenges but also to innovate together. Some of the groups are creating deliverables, and we're excited to see what these groups do and what form they take in the next couple of years.

We also just launched a new public-facing webpage for the NNPQC, as well as a complimentary private portal for all PQCs. It launched just a month ago, and it has been exciting. We're working in close partnership with our Comms team to think about incentivizing engagement and participation, maybe even some gamification features. We believe this will revolutionize the way PQCs collaborate.

**How do you incorporate equity in your project and your work?**

This is so important. We think of equity not as just a check in the box, but a foundational tenet to the work we do, as it is so closely and inextricably linked with the mission of the NNPQC. We are trying to weave equity into all of the work we do and all of the conversations we have.

Our five-year funding was just renewed a year ago for the project. When that happened, we decided to add a fourth co-chair to the NNPQC Executive Committee— a health equity co-chair. This individual helps us to do what we like to say, walk the walk, and not just talk the talk. That's a really important piece to have that consistent guidance and voice at the table.

We also launched a health equity community of practice just last year, and this group meets quarterly convening national partners and several of the PQCs that are leading the way in operationalizing health equity initiatives. This group has met, I believe three times now, and now that we have an idea of what one another is doing. We're going to start thinking about how we can bring this together and create a deliverable that benefits all PQCs and other groups doing the work in birth equity and reproductive justice. We're not quite sure what shape that will take yet, but we know something great will come out of this group too. It's inspiring to hear from different organizations and people quite literally all over the country about the work they're doing to best support mothers and birthing people and babies.

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

We are currently deep in the weeds with planning the NNPQC's annual meeting, which will be held in December in Denver, CO. This planning effort has been all-hands-on-deck, and a super highly anticipated event. I don't think the NNPQC has convened an in-person national meeting since 2018, so we're very excited about it. The agenda is shaping up to be a nice variety of topics and speakers. We're trying to emphasize this being a time for peer learning, connection, and collaboration, allowing PQCs to connect, potentially with someone who they maybe haven't before. Then they can create that rapport in person and then jump on the PQC Portal after the meeting and continue to connect.