Insights

NICHQ Employee Spotlight: Nathaniel Pickett, Ph.D.

November 30, 2023

Nathaniel Ray Pickett, Ph.D.,
NICHQ Web & Product Manger

Full name and title: Nathaniel Ray Pickett, Ph.D.

Time with NICHQ: 6 months

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

I didn't come into NICHQ through what I imagine are the normal channels, like public health or having a medical background. This is my first foray into maternal and child health, but I do, nevertheless, strongly identify with NICHQ's mission to help every child achieve their optimal health.

I worked in nonprofits and higher education prior to this, so all my professional experience and my work experience have been around helping people doing mission-driven work. I was certainly drawn to those aspects of NICHQ, and they are some of the big reasons why I was excited to investigate NICHQ and accept this job. It has been great, and I really have learned so much.

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This was a brand-new sphere for me. Learning the various aspects of what it means to work in MCH and some of the specific challenges families and children face – all aligned with the things that I feel are important. Things like equity, resisting oppression, and giving voice to the voiceless. Those are some major trends in my previous work, both as an academic and in the nonprofit sector.

How have you incorporated your past experiences in your current role as NICHQ's Web & Product Manager?

Before this, I was a department of one doing communications at a nonprofit here in Kansas. That really forced me to learn a lot of skills and on the job training. Those skills have all been super useful coming here, including writing press releases and working with legislators and then doing member messaging and working with coalition partners as well. I worked with some of our member organizations and members themselves helping craft different messages, in all kinds of forms. I utilized video and text, wrote for publications, and created emails. Additionally, I produced a lot of web content – social media, graphic design. Web content creation and graphic design have always been hobbies since childhood. Having the opportunity to formalize those into work experience, and getting paid for what I enjoy doing is nice. I'm very excited to be able to use some of those skills and continue developing them further.

What is your biggest accomplishment since joining NICHQ's Communication and Digital Strategy Department?

Developing CORAL has been a big success. It seems as if people are really enjoying using it and are finding the platform easy to use. The buy-in and uptake from our project partners here at NICHQ has been heartening. As we are looking to develop CORAL further, it's exciting to lead the work on that.

As a secondary answer to that, it's not so much a proudest achievement of mine, but one of the things that I really do most enjoy is just how welcoming and great the team is here at NICHQ. I immediately felt like I was part of the team and that I was contributing to something worthwhile, and people had my back. We are all on board together. Having mutual support is always good, and it is something you don't get when you are a department of one.

How have you been able to incorporate equity in your new role?

This is something that I came with my own experiences and ideas of what equity work looks like from my history. Again, not really connecting because I had no prior experience in MCH. A lot of the areas of equity that I brought in and that I focus on are things like accessibility.

If we're putting something up on the internet, making a website, whatever – I'm making sure people can understand what is being written and get to the content. Some of that is technical and some of that is writing and some of that is design, but all of it just makes sure that the most amount of people can have the easiest access to the information and resources we're putting out.

That's really been my area of focus when it comes to equity – focusing on accessibility. That also includes things like writing for different reading levels and making sure that a webpage will still

load even if you are on your 2G Edge connection on your phone. The images might not come in, but the text will be there, you will still be able to read it, and it will be a good and comfortable experience to access what we're put putting out. Also along with that is making sure that the processes that we have in place, both for users and internally within the staff, are easy and intuitive.

What are some goals you're looking forward to achieving in the upcoming year?

There's a lot of exciting things on the horizon in the next year. We're rebuilding the website and that's going to be awesome. I'm excited, and it's going to be fun working on that whole project. Also, just thinking about taking CORAL to the next level.

The goals for me and my work and my position are really just making sure that these new products and refreshes that come out, are working for everyone and that they're a value add across the board. Then also leaning into some of those strengths and seeing where we can be more effective with our messaging and how we can continue to increase NICHQ's brand recognition and have more people know who we are and what we do. Because what we do is important and valuable, and the more people that know about it, the better. Leaning into that work and getting NICHQ's name out there more, having a stronger and better presence in the public is one place where I would really like to help push us a little bit further.