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Practicum Site: Tennessee Justice Center

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Advocating for Health Equity: My Experience with the Tennessee Justice Center



Introduction: I completed my practicum experience with The Tennessee Justice Center in Nashville, TN as a Lefkowitz fellow working with the Health Advocacy team. The objectives of the practicum were to: 1. Advocate for Medicaid expansion in Tennessee to improve healthcare access for children and adults in the coverage gap, 2. Educate current and future healthcare providers on social determinants of health and health equity, and 3. Improve written and oral communication skills of audience-appropriate public health content.

Methods: Objective 1 was addressed by researching, presenting, and writing on the importance of Medicaid expansion in Tennessee, as well as by circulating healthcare provider pledges and toolkits to advocate for health equity and specifically Medicaid expansion. Objective 2 was addressed by providing live and recorded trainings for current physicians, medical students, and genetic counseling students. Objective 3 was addressed via presentations and Op-Ed publications.

Outcomes: Practicum products included a training webinar for physicians on social determinants of health and Medicaid entitled "Patient Advocacy in Tennessee", two Op-Eds published in The Tennessean ("How Tennessee lawmakers can increase mental health resources for children" and "How expanding TennCare could help keep our rural hospitals open"), an "Ask the Doc: Children's Talk" vlog on the importance of pediatric vaccinations, and a "Physician's Round Table" discussion on LGBTQ+ healthcare.

Conclusions: All three objectives of the practicum were met. Multiple products advocating for health equity and Medicaid expansion were produced and disseminated to Tennessee parent and healthcare provider audiences. The TJC continues to work on spreading awareness on the importance of TennCare expansion, and on gathering physician signatures on the pledge to advocate for Medicaid expansion. We are organizing another "Physician's Round Table" discussion on healthcare for immigrant populations in the coming months and hope to continue widespread education on health equity and advocacy.