

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

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Background and Practicum Objectives

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 as a method 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.

Products



TJC intern, Ellen McMahon, wrote an excellent Op-ed on the increasing need to expand access of mental health services for children in low resource households.



tennessean.com
 How Tennessee lawmakers can increase mental health resources for children | ... COVID-19 shifted many health care resources to virtual services, leaving some children with mental health disorders unable to obtain treatment.

How expanding TennCare could help keep our rural hospitals open | Opinion

The more people who become eligible for government-funded health insurance, the greater the number of insured people who could visit hospitals in Tennessee.

Alexander Gimeno and Ellen McMahon Guest columnists
 Published 5:01 a.m. CT July 19, 2022 | Updated 12:12 p.m. CT July 19, 2022

CHILDREN'S CHAT: VACCINES FOR KIDS



Children's Chat: Children and Vaccines

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 and Future Directions

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

