

Madeline Killeen
MPP ' 22
Sillerman Fellow 2021

Internship at Boston Children's Hospital Office of Community Health Reflection Paper

I was drawn to the Sillerman Center Fellowship because of the power philanthropy work has in impacting our communities, especially when it has a social justice focus. I am a big picture person and enjoy tackling problems from a systematic level. Philanthropy is an opportunity to do that, but in a way that includes impacted communities. To me, it also seemed more creative than rigid government policies. It was a field I had little experience in, but one I wanted to explore as I move forward on my career path.

This past summer, I had the honor to intern in the Office of Community Health (OCH) at Boston Children's Hospital as they started a new round of three-year grant making initiatives. I started just as the Request for Proposals opened, and unfortunately missed the final decision-making process. However, in the three months I was there, I was able to witness the time and attention that went into the Letter of Intent review process and how impactful it can be to invest in communities.

One of the first lessons they teach you when you study Public Health, is how important the social determinants are when determining our health. This summer, the OCH at Boston Children's had four initiatives open: The Healthy Living Initiative, Family Housing Stability, Family Economic Stability and Opportunity, and Birth to Five Child Health and Development. All these initiative's goals are to promote and improve health and well-being for children and families. This is done through not just healthy food and exercise but making sure families are economically stable, have a safe home, and have support for children's proper development.

It was encouraging to see this focus, as well as see how much attention OCH puts into including the voices of the communities impacted. It opened my eyes to how collaborative this funding process can be. Through working with an outside evaluator and having review committee members come in from all over the city, OCH is mediating multiple groups to come to an optimal outcome. Not only that, but during this process they were already planning for the next initiatives. I was able to support a survey that was being created to better understand the needs of mental and behavioral health providers and students in the city when it comes to diverse and culturally competent care and staffing. This project was of particular interest to me, as behavioral and mental health care access is a topic I am passionate about, and I was able to learn a lot about the gaps in care and research in this topic across the country.

Through this internship, I learned about grantmaking, proposal reviewing, survey design, Social Return on Investment studies, Theories of Change, and had ample opportunities to practice my writing skills. However, the real takeaway for me was that it was a position I could see myself in when I graduate, which was refreshing. I have interned for Public Health departments in the past, as well as for a non-profit, and I also worked for a hospital. This sector of hospitals funding the community, while also occasionally partnering with the public sector, was one that felt like a culmination of everything I am interested in. There is structure, creativity, and impact. Going forward, the lessons I learned about the power of community and of holistic perspectives, are one I know will enrich my career.

I am thankful for the Sillerman Center for introducing me to this opportunity. I am also thankful to the incredible team at the Office for Community Health at Boston Children's for welcoming me this summer and giving me space to explore my interests and grow. It was a meaningful education and work experience and a great first step into the world of philanthropy.