

spotlight on our students

MANN CHILD POLICY EXTERN Debra Zauner Debra Zauner is a senior double major in biology and psychology with a minor in chemistry, whose goal is to attend medical school and become a child psychiatrist. Having been involved with high school and undergraduate mock trial for seven years, she became interested in law. Debra felt the Mann Child Policy externship would be a great opportunity to merge her interests in children, health, and justice.



Debra applied and was selected to complete the externship with University Hospitals Office of Government Relations in the Fall of her senior year in 2009. University Hospitals Office of Government Relations serves as a liaison between University Hospitals including Rainbow Babies & Children's Hospital and the government at the local, state and federal levels. The office works closely with legislators and hospital personnel to impact policy that concerns the health, safety and general well-being of children. Debra's main responsibility as an extern was to research and apply for Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) designations for five University Hospital facilities.

Debra also assisted on numerous other projects. She helped in gaining Northern Ohio Poison Center (NOPC) funding by researching Ohio counties' budget processes. The NOPC serves one third of the state of Ohio by providing information to families and health professionals about poison control. She also researched and summarized new state health-related legislation, drafted policy memoranda and assisted in outreach and partnership-building on a regular basis.

BACKGROUND: Lack of Physicians Impedes Children's Access to Health Care

The current number of pediatricians in the workforce is adequate to serve the number of children in the country; however, there are critical variances in the equitable distribution of

physicians. Urban and rural areas are commonly underserved.¹ Ohio has a shortage of primary care doctors: pediatricians, general and family practitioners, obstetrician/gynecologists, and internists.² Some government programs have been funded to improve access to health care where there is a shortage of providers, such as the J-1 Visa Waiver Program and the National Health Service Corps. The J-1 Visa Waiver Program allows foreign-trained physicians to practice in underserved areas. Cleveland has nineteen (19) physicians working under a J-1 Visa.³ The National Health Service Corps provides scholarships and loan repayment programs to physicians who spend a certain number of years in rural or urban areas. Access to health care is an important factor in maternal and child health. Prenatal care, regular well-baby visits for routine health screens and immunizations, and on-going medical check-ups throughout childhood help to build a foundation for good health.

POLICY RESEARCH: What is a Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) Designation?

The HPSA Designation Program is administered by the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services. The HPSA program developed a method that could be used to identify areas with the most severe shortages of health care professionals, which could be used by the National Health Service Corps and the J-1 Visa Waiver Program.

There are three different types and three different classes of HPSA designations: primary, dental and mental health care; and geographic, population, and facilities. A medical facility can

only qualify if the facility provides a majority of its services to those who reside in geographic HPSA areas and the facility has insufficient capacity to meet the area's needs. The second criterion is established by demonstrating two of the following four conditions: (1) more than 8,000 outpatient visits per year per full-time equivalent (FTE) physician on the staff; (2) excessive usage of emergency room facilities for routine care; (3) waiting time for appointments is more than seven days for established patients or more than fourteen days for new patients for routine health services; or, (4) waiting time at the facility is longer than one hour for appointments or two hours for walk-ins.

There is no formal application to gain designation, rather a facility must file a request with the Ohio Department of Health (ODH). The request must include information regarding each of the following areas: total population, number of providers and total FTEs, percent of the population at 100% and 200% of the Federal Poverty Level, infant mortality rate, low birth weight rate, miles and minutes to the nearest source of non-designated care, map of the area to the contiguous areas, and the inability of the contiguous areas to provide care.

The ODH HPSA Request Process

University Hospitals has a HPSA designation for Rainbow Babies & Children's Hospital, but it was seeking new designations for five additional clinics: Otis Moss Jr. Health Clinic, Pediatric and Adult Mental Health Clinic, Tapper Dental Clinic, Douglas Moore Health Center, and the Women's Hospital. All of the clinics, except the Women's Hospital, serve children who reside in East Cleveland and surrounding areas. The

MANN CHILD POLICY EXTERNSHIPS The Schubert Center for Child Studies and the Childhood Studies Program at Case Western Reserve University collaborate with community policy organizations to offer undergraduate students a practical hands-on experiential learning opportunity. Students work directly with professionals who design and implement policies that impact the lives of children and families, and have the opportunity to apply concepts learned in the classroom to local and national policy work. Students can use their externship to fulfill their *SAGES Capstone* experience in some disciplines. For more information, visit <http://www.case.edu/artsci/schubert/>

Women's Health Center is where many economically disadvantaged women seek prenatal care and medical care for labor and delivery. As part of Debra's project, she needed to calculate the number of patients seen and the extent to which they were disadvantaged.

After contacting financial analysts and department chairs, Debra received patient data, including the street address and zip code for each of the facilities.ⁱⁱⁱ The data was sent to the Urban Studies Department at Cleveland State University to be geo-coded (zip codes linked to census

tracks by patient residence). The data was analyzed in excel, matched to the census tracks belonging to the geographic HPSA designations and then tabulated. The sum of patients who came from HPSA areas was compared to those who came from non-HPSA areas. Facilities that had 50.1% or more patients from HPSA areas met the criteria to be designated. The two facilities with the majority of patients from HPSA areas were the Douglas Moore Health Center and the Women's Health Center, which are both located at the main University Hospitals campus near Case Western Reserve University.

This project was a logistical and statistical challenge for Debra, but it was very rewarding. Going through the process educated her about the needs in Cleveland and gave her practical knowledge of how to complete such a large task efficiently. She applied knowledge from her previous research experiences and improved her analytical, writing and communication skills. Doing so, she was able to complete a project that will benefit the hospital, physicians, and children who are most in need of health care services.

The UNIVERSITY HOSPITALS OFFICE OF GOVERNMENT RELATIONS serves as the liaison between University Hospitals and its Rainbow Babies & Children's Hospital and government officials at the local, state and federal levels of government. The Office of Government Relations impacts policy that affects the health, safety and general well being of children by working closely with physicians, administrators, and staff at Rainbow Babies & Children's Hospital, annually ranked one of the top five children's hospitals nationally. It also partners with the Center for Child Health & Policy at Rainbow and the Department of Child Advocacy and Protection to advocate for legislation and other forms of regulations that will have a positive impact on the lives of children.

"Debra was a tremendous intern for our office. Through her hard work and dedication, she was able to get our applications submitted to the Ohio Department of Health, which in the end will benefit not only our clinical staff but the patients we serve." Katarina Tague, Manager, Public Policy, University Hospitals Office of Government Relations

Debra's experience "My experience as a Mann Child Policy Extern at University Hospital was so rewarding. The staff in the department were so welcoming and helpful, and they were always willing to share their experience with me. Working collaboratively with physicians, policy makers, and advocates, I contributed to improving access to health care for Cleveland families. Being able to work in a different department of the hospital enabled me to see the many opportunities for medical professionals in advocacy. The externship has inspired me to continue my involvement with child health advocacy in the future."

ⁱ American Academy of Pediatrics – Division of Workforce and Medical Education Policy. 2009. American Academy of Pediatrics. Retrieved March 9, 2010, from <http://www.aap.org/workforce/>

ⁱⁱ Visa program not helping ease Ohio's primary care doctors shortage. Cleveland.com. 17 February 2008. 15 January 2010 (<http://www.cleveland.com>)

ⁱⁱⁱ The dental clinic was the only exception due to time and access constraints.

THE SCHUBERT CENTER FOR CHILD STUDIES in the College of Arts and Sciences at Case Western Reserve University strives to bridge research, practice and policy and to promote educational initiatives across disciplines. Our focus is on children and childhood from infancy through adolescence and in local, national, international and global contexts.

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