

Insights

NICHQ Employee Spotlight: Colleen Bernard

In honor of our [20th anniversary](#), we're sharing insights, memories and goals from the



Full name and title

Colleen Bernard, Project Specialist

Years with NICHQ:

Seven months

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

I joined NICHQ after completing my undergraduate degree in Health Management and Policy at the University of New Hampshire (go Wildcats!) At school, I became interested in maternal and child health and health equity. I found NICHQ to be a perfect fit for my background and passions. I now work on projects that aim to reduce disparities in early childhood development ([ECHE Landscape](#)) and safe infant sleep and breastfeeding ([NAPPSS-IIN](#)).

Favorite memory from a NICHQ project:

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My favorite memory from a NICHQ project was from our NAPPSS-IIN Cohort C Expert Planning Meeting. We convened a group of diverse safe infant sleep and breastfeeding experts from across the nation to discuss ways we could involve community partners in the next phase of our project. This was one of the most animated meetings I have ever been to! The energy in the room was palpable. The key takeaway from this gathering was that authentic community partnerships at all levels—from grassroots to national—are needed to make an impact. I was so inspired by the fierce advocacy of this group. Most meeting attendees had decades of experience working with communities in the field, and it was great collaborating with them to work toward eliminating racial disparities in safe sleep and breastfeeding. This meeting, though spirited, engendered a great sense of unity and purpose.

Biggest lesson-learned when working on a quality improvement (QI) project:

It's important to respect the science of improvement while also acknowledging how demanding these projects are for our teams. There is a learning curve with QI and the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA), and the data collection process can be very rigorous. Our teams are so dedicated to their work. As project staff, I have learned to better appreciate the time and resources our teams are able to devote to this work. It is not easy, but the resulting changes are worth the effort.

Funniest thing that ever happened on a NICHQ project:

At our NAPPSS-IIN Cohort B Learning Session 1, teams were asked to do an exercise involving tennis balls. The objective was to pass the tennis ball to everyone at their table as fast as possible. Teams did this and then had to cut their fastest time in half. It was contained pandemonium in the room! People were laughing and shouting as they tried to pass the ball around their circle. It was quite competitive! Everyone had a fun time and it brought great energy to the meeting

What are you most proud of from your time with NICHQ?

I am most proud of the work we are doing with our NAPPSS-IIN project. Our aim is to make safe sleep and breastfeeding a national norm. This is a large project with many moving pieces. I hear the enthusiasm from the teams on calls and at Learning Sessions. I see the work our National Action Team members are doing to change the conversation around breastfeeding and safe sleep. My colleagues work tirelessly to ensure health equity is at the center of everything that we do. There are so many people involved in this effort, and I'm proud of the progress we have made to date and excited for what we will accomplish in the coming years through this collective effort.

What are your goals for NICHQ's future?

I'm excited for us to continue to elevate the role of our diverse families and community partners because we cannot do our work without their guidance and support. I would like us to continue to develop more opportunities to engage these partners at the decision-making level. The community is always our most expert faculty by virtue of their lived experiences. It is essential that we work with members of the communities we serve so that we can deliver timely, culturally appropriate and supported technical assistance.