

Insights

NICHQ Employee Spotlight: Danisha Charles

In celebration of over 20 years improving health outcomes for children, we're sharing insights from the NICHQ team.



Full name and title: Danisha Charles, MPH, Project Specialist

Time with NICHQ: 6 Months

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

My background and experiences include economics, human resources, administration and research project coordination. From a young age, I knew I wanted to help contribute to the healthcare field but didn't know how without becoming a medical professional. After earning an economics degree from the University of Connecticut (Go Huskies!), I began my career search in the public health field. As I was learning about various public health issues, policies and improvement methods throughout my graduate courses, I learned that my passion is advocating for those with inadequate resources due to systemic inequity, especially in terms of population health. I was drawn to NICHQ's mission statement and its emphasis on equity as it aims to address systems of power as inherent to health and healthcare disparities. I joined NICHQ a few months before completing my Master's degree and I'm excited to continue contributing to their great efforts!

Favorite story from a NICHQ project:

My favorite story is from the NICHQ project [Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems ColIN](#). I had the opportunity to plan, coordinate and moderate a virtual learning session that brought together all the project participants, as well as family partners and national partners. This was my first time attending and hosting a two-day virtual meeting, and it was truly rewarding. I enjoyed watching valuable content being shared, networking being done from coast to coast and hearing personal stories that brought the work being done to life on virtual platform. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us all the virtual possibilities available and I'm proud to be part of an organization that is willing and able to continue making an impact regardless if it's online or in-person.

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

Don't assume. Start small. Can't have trials without errors. Know and learn the difference between improvement and change.

These are all concepts that you'll realize while working on a quality improvement (QI) project. Some things aren't as obvious or straightforward as they seem, and it takes time, effort and patience to improve a process or system. That, and teamwork! NICHQ's work would not be possible without our incredible teams!

Funniest thing that ever happened on a NICHQ project:

Our NICHQ Culture Committee hosted a celebration called "hygge" – don't worry, I still can't pronounce it either. Hygge is a Danish term that translates to 'comfort and contentedness' or being 'consciously cozy.' Hygge is all about delighting in simple pleasures with others. To celebrate this, staff dressed comfortably in slippers while sipping out of our favorite mugs filled with hot cocoa. We had a book exchange, great snacks, and an intense game of "Heads Up." It was hilarious to see what people came up with to try to get the others to understand the clue. It was great to see how silly (and competitive) our staff can get.

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

I am proud of how seamlessly I've been embedded in the NICHQ culture and how pleasantly challenging the experience has been. I've learned how to navigate difficult situations and to think in a QI manner at all times. In terms of projects, I am proud of NICHQ's commitment to supporting children and families in need, regardless of the circumstances.

What are your goals for NICHQ's future?

My goals for NICHQ include strengthening my skill set and expertise to continue being a public health advocate through quality improvement efforts. NICHQ staff is outstandingly supportive and is constantly encouraging one another to advance from their current role. I would like NICHQ to continue their efforts while considering the realities behind the data we collect, the content we read, and the stories we hear. Within our organization, I encourage NICHQ to continue its health equity journey and make the appropriate actions and changes to truly reflect its mission and values.