

Title: Developing a novel, longitudinal advanced advocacy training program for postgraduate clinicians

Authors: Amanda M. Stewart, MD, MPH^{a,b}; Joshua Greenberg, JD^a; Kathryn Audette^c, MSW, MBA; Ariel Winn, MD^{a,b}

Affiliations: ^aBoston Children's Hospital, Boston, Massachusetts; ^bHarvard Medical School, Harvard University, Boston, Massachusetts; ^cDana Farber Cancer Institute, Boston, Massachusetts

Introduction: Advocacy is an important skillset for clinicians, yet there are limited options for clinicians that want to expand their advocacy skills, particularly after completing training. The postgraduate policy advocacy opportunities that do exist tend to require clinicians to take time off from their clinical positions or move geographically, which may limit participation.

Program Description: To address these challenges, we designed a longitudinal, in-situ advanced advocacy curriculum for postgraduate clinicians. This yearlong Advocacy and Public Policy (APP) fellowship is based within our institution's Office of Government Relations (OGR). Fellows maintain their clinical positions within the institution, and complete advocacy work in conjunction with the team's local, state, federal, and behavioral health government relations specialists.

Results: Since its inception in 2018, a total of seven clinicians have participated in the interdisciplinary fellowship, including a nurse, nurse practitioner and faculty and fellow physicians from five different specialties. At the local, state, and federal level, fellows have advocated for legislation that addresses a wide variety of important child health topics. Many of these bills have been successfully passed into law; others remained under consideration (Table 1). APP fellows have also produced academic advocacy scholarship such as peer-reviewed publications in high impact journals and presentations at regional and national conferences on advocacy efforts and policy-based research. Additionally, fellows' work has generated media interest via television, radio, and written interviews.

Conclusions/Lessons Learned: We found that the APP fellowship had significant benefits both to our participants and to OGR. Clinicians strengthen their advocacy skills and direct their advocacy efforts at bills with a higher likelihood to effect change, with additional knowledge gained by following bills longitudinally throughout the legislative and regulatory process.

Bringing clinicians into OGR provides frontline experiences which strengthen advocacy efforts, particularly when clinicians blend data with de-identified patients stories and connect OGR with their clinical networks. We suggest that all clinicians who want advanced advocacy training explore the possibility of training within an institutional government relations team, and that institutions develop training opportunities for clinician-advocates.

Table 1: State legislation supported by APP fellows' advocacy

Issue	Bill	Legislation status
Firearm violence prevention	Bill to enact Extreme Risk Protection Orders which allow family members or police departments to suspend access to firearms for a person deemed at risk of harm to themselves or others	Passed July 2018
Youth smoking/vaping	"Tobacco to 21" bill to increase the age of purchase for tobacco, including combustible cigarettes and vaping products, from 18 to 21	Bill signed into law in December 2018, went into immediate effect
Family homelessness	Bill to remove a requirement for families to stay in a night "not meant for human habitation" to qualify for state-run shelter system	Requirement overturned via budget language in July 2019 and has passed in every annual budget since; thus, remains the current Massachusetts law
Distracted driving	Bill to ban the use of electronic devices while driving (enhancing the current law which only banned texting while driving)	Bill passed November 2019, went into effect February 2020
Children with medical complexity	Bill to direct the state to perform a comprehensive study of children with medical complexity to inform and improve the systems that serve them	Bill passed November 2019, report released February 2022
Food insecurity	"SNAPGap" bill (later versions referred to as "Common Application" bill) would allow individuals to apply for SNAP at the same time as state-based Medicaid program, to increase enrollment in SNAP by reducing administrative burden for families	Passed in August 2022
Mental health	Multiple bills to provide parity between medical and mental health coverage, address emergency department mental health boarding, improve transparency of insurance coverage, and increase access to outpatient and school-based mental health services	Omnibus Children's Health and Wellness Act passed November 2019. Omnibus Mental Health Addressing Barriers to Care (ABC) Act passed August 2022.

Healthcare coverage for postpartum people	Bill to provide 1 year of state-based Medicaid coverage for eligible postpartum people (up from 60 days)	Enacted through regulatory action in April 2022, permanently passed into legislation January 2023
Food insecurity	Bill that would provide universal school meals without requiring application or proof of income, to increase food access and reduce stigma	One-year extension of pandemic-era policy passed to continue through 2022-2023 school year; bill to make permanent remains under consideration
Poverty mitigation	Bill that would expand the Earned Income Tax Credit to allow more families to be eligible and to increase benefits	Remains under consideration in 2023-2024 legislative session
Trauma	“Stop The Bleed” bill would require public buildings which are required to have an automated external defibrillator (AED) to also have a bleeding control kit	Remains under consideration in 2023-2024 legislative session
Healthcare coverage from immigrant children	“Cover All Kids” bill to provide comprehensive state-based Medicaid coverage to children regardless of immigration status	Remains under consideration in 2023-2024 legislative session