

This summer I worked as the Health Center Advocacy Program (HCAP) intern at Planned Parenthood Greater Memphis Region, which is a nonprofit that provides high-quality and affordable health care, comprehensive sex education, and sexual health resources for the greater Memphis area. I worked in the education and development department on the second floor, and the health center was on the first floor. The responsibilities I had as HCAP intern were overseeing the program: I did research on HCAPs in other states, attended webinars to learn about HCAP and legal restrictions on the program, organized the program for the summer, and launched the voter registration drive, which is a project within HCAP across the country. Planned Parenthood Greater Memphis Region's primary objectives with the Health Center Advocacy Program (HCAP) is to engage patients with advocacy work and build a story bank. HCAP outreach-- in PPGMR's health centers and via neighborhood canvassing-- enlisted patients in its volunteer program, and as speakers and volunteer leaders, would reflect the racially diverse population of the Memphis area. Phase 1 began in June 2016 and will end in August 2016. The voter registration drive included us registering Tennesseans, Mississippians, and Arkansans at events, like the Pink Party, a party at an outdoor concert event for donors and supporters, and outside the health center. I felt extremely productive to be able to help others in Memphis get registered to vote and encouraged them to get involved in elections regardless of how they would vote.

My duties with HCAP included helping train volunteers for HCAP, both before they go into the health centers and talk to patients and the first time they talk with

patients. I also was trained as a Tennessee Stories Project interviewer. While HCAP looks for patients who can tell stories about Planned Parenthood, TN Stories Project looks for women who have had abortions in TN, live in TN and had an abortion, or have some connection to TN and have had an abortion. Because of this, most of the abortion stories we gathered through HCAP were directed to the TN Stories Project. In my time at PPGMR, I got to meet with two women and record their abortion story in order to publish it with their consent and reduce stigma around abortion.

In addition to the TN Stories Project and HCAP, I helped with small projects that the Community Engagement and Advocacy Coordinator, my intern supervisor, oversaw. This included small events like IllumiNATION, a Memphis city tour through the 1 in 3 Campaign by Advocates for Youth that brought attention to the statistic that 1 in 3 women will have an abortion in their lifetimes. When I was not working on the Health Center Advocacy Program, I would recruit people for PPGMR's volunteer orientations or recruit volunteers for projects and health fairs. I trained to be a Sexpert, a college peer sexual health educator, and frequently helped pack condom bags for Free Condoms Memphis, a campaign by Planned Parenthood to provide hundreds of free condoms and other contraceptives to any establishment that wanted to provide them, even local barber shops.

Because the Health Center Advocacy Program would not require 40 hours a week, I also used the time to volunteer for Tennessee Advocates for Planned Parenthood, the recently launched advocacy arm of Planned Parenthood in TN. I recruited volunteers, worked phone banks, and worked polling places to make up the

rest of the hours I needed for the internship. I got to see how electoral work is supported by 501(c)(4) organizations. We were able to support one state representative who won her primary race, and got very close with another candidate, who only lost by about 600 votes. I felt like the calls I made to neighborhoods really made a difference.

I gained so many skills and experiences from these projects and tasks.

Phone-banking and calling strangers were the hardest part of the internship. I endured a lot of anticipating anxiety about phone banking, but came out on top. I was able to put aside my fear about talking to strangers and learn a new skill! In addition, I gained experience in making presentations during the volunteer orientations and training sessions with potential volunteers. Doing so developed my people skills, like encouraging strangers to join our movement and appear like I am experienced as an organizer. I believe I also gained the ability to have a more open mind and give sympathy more readily. This development occurred the most in the health center (where I watched a patient on an abortion procedure day vomit in the hallway) and interviewing the subjects for the TN Stories Project. I recorded a story about women who were alone in getting abortions, where both their significant others and health care providers left them in the dark about the procedure and the process. I was told that deciding to have an abortion was the hardest decision of one woman's life; she also told me that it was a decision she has never regretted, and that it was one that was definitely right for her at the time. It made me realize that pursuing a part in the reproductive rights movement is more complicated than I had thought, and that women need more emotional support in choosing to have abortions than I had

assumed before. Choosing to have an abortion is never an easy decision, and our lawmakers would benefit from realizing that. Leaders of the reproductive rights movement would benefit from bringing to light the difficulties of having abortions instead of acting like it's not a big deal for anyone.

This internship revamped my passion for reproductive rights. It caused me to realize that there is a lot of busy work that goes into getting laws changed and getting people with your interests into positions of power. It also made me realize how unfair politics could be. I sat on the Endorsement Committee for TN Advocates for Planned Parenthood as they chose Memphis candidates to endorse. I met state representatives that had lost their interest and passion in their position and in representing the interests of their constituents. Seeing this made me curious about going to law school and having some part in policy making. I am interested in politics as a career and see it as more possible than before. I recognize the importance of volunteers, but want to pursue a job where I do not have to recruit them- I truly believe that that job is not for me. I am curious about a future in the feminist movement, but also am ready to try shadowing someone in a sustainability field.