

Planned Parenthood Affiliates of California Summer 2008

“The difference between a successful person and others is not a lack of strength, not a lack of knowledge, but rather a lack in will”- **Vince Lombardi**. The will to advocate, assist in prevention, and gain policy experience influenced me to intern at Planned Parenthood Affiliates of California (PPAC). Public Health is my main area of interest and PPAC followed legislature that was relevant to public health in terms of policy. An internship experience can expose one to different types of events that will expand both knowledge and perspectives. This particular internship assisted in expanding my perception of prevention in a political perspective through: lobbying, understanding legislative literature, and the importance of influencing legislature to vote on bills that support reproductive health.

When I first arrived to PPAC, I was greeted by a team of employees that felt strongly about preserving the nature of reproductive health rights and family planning. My first task was to create an excel spreadsheet that displayed all of the clinics in assembly and senate member's district in California. The purpose of this was to provide a quick and detailed form that easily revealed which clinics were housed in a certain assembly/ senator member's district. I appreciated doing this task because it gave me more experience using the Microsoft Excel program. Following this task, was a teleconference (hosted by Health Access) that I participated in about the state budget deficit and its' impact on low-income health care programs in California. Unbeknownst to me, this teleconference influenced my interest in writing my policy analysis paper on California's health care system.

The teleconference provided information about Medi-Cal and Healthy Family Program cuts of 10 percent. This budget cut would not only decrease the number of prospective enrollees, but would cut Medi-Cal provider rates. Both of these factors involve low-income Californians not receiving the necessary health services that could negatively affect their health. After learning of the budget cuts, I found the atmosphere of the office to be somewhat tense because they were concerned about Planned Parenthood programs experiencing a decrease in funding for the populations that they serve. This helped me tie the connection of how the budget cut could impact Planned Parenthood.

Another experience that I will always remember is hearing Presidential Candidate Barack Obama, speak on a teleconference to PPAC organizations all throughout California. Obama was being endorsed by PPAC and he stated how he was pro-choice and was willing to advocate for women's rights and not overturn Roe vs. Wade should he be elected president. The word pro-choice reminded me of what an employee had asked me to define before I could intern. At that moment, I understood that the idea of pro-choice and anti-choice was a constant political battle, and that PPAC's mission involved preserving a pro-choice environment. That experience will never be forgotten.

My internship at PPAC enlightened me to seek prevention through policy. Before this internship, I thought that prevention was only through the avenue of public health. However, working at PPAC has given me a political perspective that allows me to expand my knowledge. I have experienced learning which assembly and senator

members oppose or support bills that assist in prevention like AB 16 (Evans) that promote vaccinating girls for HPV at a certain age in youth. I truly feel like a more well-rounded student than ever because I now have a political and health foundation. This new knowledge of policy exceeded my level of thought. I find that prevention is a beautiful concept, but it cannot be applied if there is no policy to support it.

One of the challenges that I faced at PPAC was that I had to develop my own tasks at times because the staff was not always available to give me one. I grew to take more initiative and research other bills that were in opposition to PPAC's goals. I researched organizations that could be a potential threat to the Planned Parenthood clinics. In most cases, those groups were extremists of a religious affiliation that promoted anti-choice. I even discovered a bill that supported more safety to clinics that perform abortion services due to a past of violent crimes previously committed. I hoped that my initiative displayed a sense of leadership. I would have liked more opportunities to go to the state capital and view a hearing about bills pertaining to PPAC. I plan to network and stay in touch in order to gain that experience.

Despite any challenges at PPAC, I have developed a strong interest in legislature and its impact on public health. I plan to continue researching bills that affect health care, particularly public health and reproductive health. I find it extremely important to continue researching news on legislature in order to have a political perspective that is modern and recent. I would recommend an internship at Planned Parenthood Affiliates of California to an intern because you gain so much experience learning about bills that affect health, programs that financially support women and children health care, interacting with the state capital, and learning how to conduct oneself in a real work environment. I will use this internship as a stepping stone towards the path of my career and continue to develop a strong sense of political knowledge. I greatly appreciated the opportunity to intern at PPAC and will continue to network with them. I will also continue to reflect on my experience and use it to guide me in my next opportunity towards my career. "He that will not reflect is a ruined man"-**Asian Proverb**.