

Weekly Report: 7/25 – 7/29
Olivia Pham

Monday July 22, 2016

Wendell Primus – Office of Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi

While with Mr. Primus, Kripa and I were able to hear about his extensive career history, particularly about his time in the Clinton administration. Mr. Primus said that even during the fight over welfare reform, the political environment was nowhere near as toxic as it is today. With this in mind, Mr. Primus does not feel that we cannot begin to fix the ACA unless the Democrats take the White House and the Senate. He also mentioned that he would be looking for another fellow, and that his portfolio would include health policy and welfare policy.

Gail Wilensky – Project HOPE

Ms. Wilensky mostly spoke on her work on Medicare during the first Bush Administration. She had excellent career advice, including the advice to become an expert in a certain area of health policy. This is something I am trying to do with this fellowship, and she suggested that I should remain in a research-related placement if I had any doubts about the work I wanted to do. She also said that, as a researcher, she refused to twist her interpretation of data and that we could also refuse to do so when faced with political pressure. This was very reassuring to hear. Finally, she recommended CBO and OMB as excellent placements after the fellowship.

Jack Ebeler, Healthcare Consultatn

Mr. Ebeler spent some time on his career and his experience leading MedPAC, which was excellent preparation for our meeting with them later in the week. He mostly focused on our personal interests and wanted to know which placements we were considering. He also provided us with plenty of advice, including the advice to understand the process of policy analysis. In order to be successful, we should be able to quickly analyze any policy put in front of us, even if we don't have the expertise.

Mayra Alvarez – Former Fellow, President of the Children's Partnership Fund

We spoke with Mayra over the phone, and it was truly a pleasure to hear about her time in the administration. It was inspiring to hear about her career path, and even more interesting because she had achieved so much at such a young age. A real take-away from this call was to not be afraid to use this fellowship to try a new path. She said that in being Winston fellows, we are guaranteed an excellent experience. We should not be afraid to deviate from the choices that previous fellows have made.

Tuesday July 23, 2016

Theresa Chalhoub, Stephanie Glover – National Partnership for Women and Children

Ms. Chalhoub and Ms. Glover work on the ACA and delivery system reform, respectively. They described their work with NPWC and helped us to understand how they build relationships through coalition work. I was interested to know if their work in reproductive health ever prevented certain organizations or members from working with them, and was surprised to hear that it does not. They are still well-trusted sources of information on both sides of the aisle because they have built trust.

Senate Committee on Finance, Subcommittee on Health (Minority)

We met with Liz Jurinka and several members of the health team, including Anne Dwyer, a former fellow. This was a very general meeting, in which we were told the topics we might be able to work on and the work culture of the committee. Since this was a large meeting we were not able to dig into details, but I will be following up with Anne to gain a better sense of the way the health team works.

Emily Johnson – MedPAC

Ms. Johnson did an excellent job introducing us to MedPAC. We learned so much about their calendar and the way the committee members work together to create reports. Since this is a very research-heavy organization, I think this is a placement I could look into after the fellowship. Unfortunately, MedPAC does not normally take fellows.

Rodney Whitlock – Vice President, ML Strategies

Mr. Whitlock considers himself to be a strong mentor, and after our meeting I must agree. He immediately dove into our backgrounds and provided us with advice on where to go for our placements. Interestingly enough, Mr. Whitlock said that Kripa and I should actually be aiming for the same placement position, which is the first time we had ever heard that. Mr. Whitlock, with his extensive experience and network, will be a great resource as I narrow down my final placement options.

Wednesday July 24, 2016

Evelyne Baumrucker – Congressional Research Services

Ms. Baumrucker, in general, explained to us the role of CRS and how the organization functions. I did not know that there were only 9 members on the healthcare financing team, which is shocking given the volume of work they have to tackle. However, all researchers are able to reach out to librarians to assist them with the more tedious work of

research (i.e. literature reviews). With my interest in research, it was great to learn where they source their data and how they present their information. Ms. Baumrucker explained that presenting information without advocating a certain position is a key aspect of CRS.

Dr. Cara James – Office of Minority Health, CMS

Our meeting with Dr. James was incredibly valuable. She explained to us the politics of working in OMH, and how she had to navigate the challenges of developing policy for specific groups of people. She also provided us with multilingual information about the ACA and moving from enrollment to actual care – this would have been so helpful while I was navigating! I am really encouraged to hear that many of the challenges I encountered as a navigator are being addressed by this office. I was especially inspired by Dr. James, who is so willing to work/navigate/compromise so that she can achieve the goals set by her office.

Andrew Roszak – Former Fellow, Child Care Awareness

Coming from an emergency preparedness perspective, Andy was a great resource to us. He offered to put us in contact with his acquaintances at the CDC, which will be great for our trip to Atlanta. Andy also introduced us to the health policy issues surrounding child care, which I had previously known nothing about. He also introduced us to several of his coworkers, who spoke about child care policy and the research they were conducting on the subject. Their new data-gathering techniques were of particular interest to me – their mapping of child care deserts in New Hampshire is a tool I look forward to exploring.

Anne Dwyer, Colin Goldfinch – Former Fellows

This was a wonderful dinner with former fellows. It was fascinating to hear about their experience working on the same committee and how they interacted with each other at that time. Hearing about their current experience on their respective committees was also informative. They provided us with plenty of advice on how to succeed as new staffers, and both also reached out to us through email after our meeting.

Thursday July 25, 2016

Arielle Woronoff, Rachel Pryor – Energy and Commerce Committee (Minority)

This was our second meeting with Ms. Woronoff and Ms. Pryor, with the intent to better understand the work available to fellows. It was an excellent conversation with both women, and we found that a fellow's portfolio could contain work on CHIP, Medicare extenders, community health centers, Medicare premiums, biosimilars, and MACRA implementation among others. Given my policy interests, this committee placement seems like an excellent fit.

Anna Abram – Office of Senator Richard Burr

We had a fascinating conversation on Sen. Burr's work in biodefense. This was followed with some very general advice about working on the Hill.

John Jonas – Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP

Mr. Jonas has a long, wonderful history in health policy, so Kripa and I spent most of our meeting listening to stories of his experiences. Mr. Jonas mentioned that he did not enjoy his brief stint at HHS, stating that the level of bureaucracy is frustrating. He recommended we work for smaller departments or agencies, such as HRSA, in order to keep our work moving forward. Finally, while we were discussing the nature of health policy, Mr. Jonas said that the great conundrum of the American health care system is to determine financial accountability. In other words, who is financially accountable in health policy? How can we create the correct incentives and align them if no group bears the consequence?

Friday July 26, 2016

Peggy O'Kane – National Committee for Quality Assurance

Ms. O'Kane provided us an overview of NCQA as an organization and described their role in really beginning the quality movement in health care. She also described the development and use of HEDIS for accreditation purposes. Ms. O'Kane described to us NCQA's interaction with congressional committee staff.. Additionally, it was interesting to hear that NCQA takes stakeholder input into account alongside the evidence from their in-house researchers.

Kristi Gribble Thompson – Office of Representative, Marsha Blackburn

Ms. Thompson described her career path to the hill (which included working in Rep. Ellmers' office) as well as her work in the office. She told us how her campaign experience made her a much smarter staffer since she was able to "whip the votes in my mind". This was a really great piece of advice, and reinforces Mr. Ebeler's emphasis on being able to perform quick mental policy analysis. Ms. Thompson also discussed Rep. Blackburn's interests in telehealth and Medicaid reform, specifically regarding the verification of special enrollment period enrollees.