

Dalia Mitchell
Winner
Medical School
MS2

Having volunteered extensively with children who have special needs, I heard countless distressed parents recount their difficulties accessing resources for their children. Inspired by these moments, my service involvements at UTSW have revolved around my desire to help vulnerable children and families overcome the systemic barriers faced while seeking care.

I pursued a public health degree in tandem with my medical education, seeking knowledge to better understand and address these barriers. As part of my M.P.H., I have spent six months at Johns Hopkins researching health disparities and clinician-family communication in pediatric surgery, for which I received \$9,400 in grant funding from the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities CARE T37 program, and the New York Academy of Medicine's David E. Rogers Fellowship. I have submitted five abstracts and presentations to spread knowledge about our findings.

Motivated by my M.P.H. studies in health inequity, I sought opportunities to advocate for patients and increase accessibility of care. I served over 100 hours at Agape Multidisciplinary Clinic – a pediatrics and family medicine free clinic – as VP and Patient Advocacy Manager. I simultaneously volunteered over 250 hours for the Patient Navigation Program (PNP) for individuals experiencing homelessness as a fellow and a leader, serving as Navigations Operations Manager and eventually Executive Director of Navigation System and Research. As a fellow, I have spent the past 1.5 years empowering women and children experiencing homelessness to navigate social barriers in our health care system. As a leader, I have spent 13 months developing and improving PNP, overseeing 43 current fellows and six navigation system/research leads, and preparing to integrate the next cohort of 40 fellows.

Encouraged by the impact of PNP, I strived to build a new program addressing the needs of an often-overlooked pediatric population. I have spent over 200 hours in the past 11 months founding a partner program between UTSW and the Dallas Juvenile Detention Center (DJDC) – the Therapeutic Arts Relieving Adverse Childhood Experiences (TRACE). This program trains medical and health professions students to harness the therapeutic benefits of art and form in mentoring relationships with children in juvenile detention. The first cohort of 12 TRACE fellows are in the final stages of their training and will

begin working with the first 12 children at the DJDC for fifteen weeks in January. Our goal is to serve 24 children in 2022 and expand thereafter. I have also recruited 11 leaders to help run TRACE and have received access to \$28,000 in grant support for the program. Using knowledge I gained in my M.P.H. coursework along with the experience I gained through my leadership roles in Agape and PNP, I have established TRACE as a sustainable program that will continue to benefit children beyond my time as a student.

As Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said, "If I cannot do great things, I can do small things in a great way." With these words in mind, I am dedicated to making small, sustainable, positive changes for children and families throughout my future service at UTSW and beyond.