



HEAVYN JENNINGS

KING NUTRITION FELLOW

UNDERGRAD: PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

GRAD SCHOOL: UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE HEALTH SCIENCE CENTER

KING CHILD HEALTH FELLOW: JUNE 2020 - JULY 2022

How did you learn about TJC and its King Child Health Fellowship?

I learned of the King Child Health Fellow position through Princeton's Health Professions Advising.

Why did you want to do the King Fellowship?

I wanted to do the fellowship because I am passionate about helping women and children access healthcare.

Did you have a typical routine during your fellowship, or did it vary from day-to-day?

My day-to-day routine varied since I was involved in advocacy and client work. I believe it made each day unpredictable but memorable.

Can you share more about one of the client cases you helped with during your Fellowship?

One case I remember is a woman and her adult daughter with special needs. I cannot remember the specifics, but it was a service issue. It was memorable for me because we were able to help her both times she called and she was one of our mothers of the year. Being able to hear her story and life journey was a heartwarming experience for me. I felt like she opened her heart to me and allowed TJC in to help get her and her daughter the support they needed to thrive.

What were some of your favorite memories at TJC during your Fellowship?

My favorite memories were hanging with my coworkers doing the community events in the Napier neighborhood.

Would you say you had a robust knowledge of (health care coverage/nutrition safety net, etc.) before your fellowship? If not, what did you learn?

I had a basic understanding of health care coverage, but during my fellowship, I felt like I was becoming an expert on TennCare and CoverKids for women and children.

What were some skills you took away/learned from the fellowship?

My biggest takeaway was compassion and grit. I learned to be compassionate toward the families and the issues they were facing trying to get basic health services. I learned grit from my fellow colleagues who fought alongside me. People like Gordon, Jane, and Vanessa come to mind because their emotions always showed on their faces.

How did your time as a fellow shape you into who you are today and the work that you do?

My time at TJC has greatly informed my clinical practice and it ignited my passion in black maternal health specifically. In August 2026, I will be starting my PhD in Nursing at Emory University where I will explore how community resources and data science can alleviate the Black Maternal Health Crisis.

What's something you wish more people knew about (health care coverage/nutrition safety net)?

I wish more people knew they qualify for services. I meet many people who never tried to apply for Medicaid or SNAP, but they are struggling to make ends meet. I always encourage them to check the income limits because they may be surprised.

Do you have any advice for current and future TJC fellows?

I would advise everyone to dig deeper and listen carefully. Dig deeper into the resources to help clients find the solution and listen carefully to discover systemic issues. More often than not, I would have multiple cases with similar issues and that is how I found where my energy needed to be focused. It's great to solve the individual cases but when I helped solve systemic cases, I felt I had a greater impact.