

SEATTLE UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW
HEALTH POLICY ADVOCACY CLINIC -- COURSE FACT SHEET

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course offers students the opportunity to develop a range of policy advocacy skills by working on current policy development projects brought to the clinic by partner organizations seeking to advance health equity and support community health improvement. In partnership with community representatives and under the supervision of clinic faculty, students will engage in any number of critical policy development functions:

- conduct policy research, analysis, and writing
- create and further stakeholder relationships and advocacy partnerships
- develop regulatory and legislative language
- generate advocacy documents (e.g., policy briefs, fact sheets, comment letters, testimony, presentations)

The problem-solving, analysis, communication and leadership skills learned will be applicable to any policy development work regardless of subject matter.

DETERMINING PROJECT READINESS

There are two levels of readiness for organizations to consider when deciding to engage in this class.

Organizational Capacity – Policy & Systems Change Work

- Clear buy-in from board of directors regarding interest in engaging in policy and systems change
- Agency staffing capacity to work in policy and system change spaces
- Open to being part of broader coalitions and collaboratives

Policy Project – Core Elements

- Can articulate a tightly framed policy objective OR a specific policy strategy in the health equity policy space
- Student project assignments are tangible and feasible within a 15-week semester
- Understand the “rules of engagement” with clinic teachers and students, including deployment of a dedicated staffer that will serve as a point of contact

PROJECTS TO DATE (2022-23)

Thank you to all the organizations that have participated in this clinical course to date, including:

[Public Health –Seattle & King County](#), [Statewide Poverty Action Network \(SPAN\) & Solid Ground](#), [Public Health Roundtable](#), [WA State Public Health Association](#), [WA State Dept of Health - Div. of Environmental Health](#), [King County Medical Society](#), [Children’s Alliance](#), [Surge Reproductive Justice](#), [Toxic-Free Future](#), and [Arcora](#). See the table below for project details.

TABLE 1 – PROJECT SUMMARY DETAILS

ORGANIZATION	PROJECT SPECIFICS
<p>Arcora</p> <p>Oral Health Screenings</p>	<p><i>Summary:</i> Tooth decay is almost entirely preventable, yet it’s the most common chronic condition among children. Poor oral health can impact a child’s school attendance, behavior, speech development, sleep, and nutrition. WA schools require vision and hearing screenings for children, in grades kindergarten, 1, 2, 3, 5, and 7. There is no comparable screening requirement for oral health. This is a missed opportunity to identify treatment needs early and to connect children to a dental home.</p> <p><i>Deliverable:</i> Policy brief with policy recommendations for Washington, that includes data, a landscape analysis (including potential allies and opponents of the proposal), and cost considerations.</p>
<p>Children’s Alliance</p> <p>Children’s Mental Health</p>	<p><i>Summary:</i> Since the COVID pandemic, many more children and communities are impacted and these outcomes are particularly acute for specific racial, family income and gender groups. A 2022 study demonstrated multiple causes, ranging from a lack of recognition of diagnosable conditions.</p> <p><i>Deliverable:</i> A policy memo that took a comparative look at how various state jurisdictions are approaching mental health policy for school-age children.</p>
<p>King County Medical Society</p> <p>Artificial Intelligence (AI) Bias in Medicine</p>	<p><i>Summary:</i> Our goal is to address AI bias in medicine, so physicians can maximize the benefits of AI while minimizing potential harm, leading to more equitable and effective healthcare practices for all patients. While AI has the potential to revolutionize medical practice and improve patient outcomes, it also poses significant challenges when not developed and deployed appropriately, including disparities in health outcomes, exclusion in training data and data quality, provider bias, and privacy concerns.</p> <p><i>Deliverable:</i> A policy memo with legal and comparative research.</p>
<p>King County Medical Society</p> <p>Standardizing WA State Death Investigations</p>	<p><i>Summary:</i> The coroner system is a legal and administrative process investigating deaths, especially those that occur under unusual, suspicious, or violent circumstances. The coroner systems can vary from one county to another depending on its size. Medical examiners are physicians who conduct autopsies for suspicious deaths, while county coroners are elected officials, often without medical or investigative training. We are looking to establish a standardized, statewide medicolegal death investigation system in Washington State, improving procedures, training, and resource distribution.</p> <p><i>Deliverables:</i> A memo that included policy, legal, and comparative study research.</p>
<p>Public Health Roundtable and the WA State Public Health Association</p> <p>Public Health Funding</p>	<p><i>Summary:</i> WA State Foundational Public Health Services (FPHS) is currently funded by general fund and vaping tax. There have been proposals in the past to dedicate FPHS funding through sugar sweetened beverage tax, increasing the vaping tax, tax on covered lives, and a tax on non-profit carrier surplus. The Public Health Roundtable supports assignment of a dedicated funding source(s) to give public health funding greater protection and sustainability.</p> <p><i>Deliverables:</i> Policy brief that includes a national survey of governmental public health funding sources.</p>
<p>Public Health – Seattle & King County</p>	<p><i>Summary:</i> Punitive legal tools have long been a part of youth substance use prevention policy. In Washington state, the penalties for youth possession of tobacco, cannabis, and alcohol range from fines to prison time. These outcomes are more likely to increase risk factors for youth than increase health, especially considering inequities in enforcement.</p>

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	<p><i>Deliverables:</i> Analysis of enforcement data; policy brief on alternatives to punitive approaches; advocacy one-pagers or slide decks; draft legislative language; a stakeholder engagement plan.</p>
<p>Statewide Poverty Action Network (SPAN) & Solid Ground</p> <p>Fraud Accountability</p>	<p><i>Summary:</i> Over the last few years, community concern around how suspected public benefit fraud is investigated has been growing. Families are often subjects of these investigations either because of department error, or honest mistakes made on complicated government forms. These concerns impact the larger community, preventing people from getting and/or asking for help when they are struggling to make ends meet.</p> <p><i>Deliverable:</i> A policy brief that captured current policy landscape, and case study analyses for three similar states (Washington, California and Florida).</p>
<p>Surge Reproductive Justice</p> <p>Whole Health</p>	<p><i>Summary:</i> Since 2020, Surge Reproductive Justice has organized the Our Words Build Power campaign, a participatory action research campaign bringing Black, Indigenous, and people of Color communities together in King County to understand the barriers and needs to accessing health care and reproductive health care. Issues surfaced to date include the barriers that Medicaid creates to accessing non-western medical care services and providers, the need for investments and awareness for community health worker models, and increased investments in factors that impact people’s health outside of clinical care.</p> <p><i>Deliverables:</i> Research, literature review, and presentations about the researched policies, along with related policy summary.</p>
<p>Toxic-Free Future</p> <p>State-level Regulatory Approaches</p>	<p><i>Summary:</i> Hundreds of millions of pounds of toxic chemicals are added to products we use every day, from electronics, food packaging, cookware and outdoor gear, to cosmetics and building materials. These chemicals contribute to a range of health impacts including chronic diseases, lowered immune system, and cancer. The federal law that ostensibly regulates chemicals, the Toxics Substances Control Act (TSCA), is insufficient to protect us from harmful impacts and does not incentivize safer alternatives. To fill this gap, some states, like Washington, step in with policies to restrict chemical use and promote safer solutions. We want to assess existing statewide laws to determine the extent to which they are advancing a hazard-based precautionary framework that leads to safer products.</p> <p><i>Deliverable:</i> Comparative summary of state approaches to “essential use” and “alternative assessments.”</p>
<p>WA State Dept of Health, Div. of Environmental Health</p> <p>Health & Safety Oversight of Corrections Facilities</p>	<p><i>Summary:</i> Correction facilities and detention facilities throughout Washington are operated and managed by different levels of government and varied entities. This has led to a patchwork of oversight governing the health and safety of inmates, detainees, and other individuals serving time in these facilities. The legislature recently granted the Washington Department of Health rulemaking authority as necessary to protect the health and safety of individuals being detained in private detention centers.</p> <p><i>Deliverable:</i> A comprehensive policy memo that included policy recommendations regarding current and potential policy frameworks behind the operation of private detention centers.</p>