

Class of 2023



Aanchal Sharma

Aanchal is an MBBS doctor from India, currently residing in Austin. Coming from a medical background, Aanchal feels that having an understanding of health, health care, and disease prevention is of utmost importance at the moment. As a Health Champion, she looks forward to implementing her leadership qualities and teamwork ethics learned from previous work experiences. Aanchal is passionate about public health relations and its promotion and is excited about the upcoming Health Champion program and events in the community.



Abbey Leff

Abbey currently works as a Licensed Social Worker at the Women's Health Institute at the University of Texas at Austin. She was born and raised in northern Minnesota and moved to Austin in January 2022. After receiving a BA in Psychology and Minor in Spanish Studies from the University of Minnesota, she then served in AmeriCorps for two years, following which she moved to Spain to teach English. Upon returning to the States, she felt motivated to blend her experiences and love for working with people and headed back to school to receive a Master of Social Work degree from the University of Minnesota (Go, Gophers!).

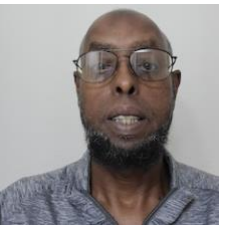
Prior to moving to Texas, she worked as a hospital Social Worker for five years. Abbey is thrilled to become a Community Health Champion and continue to explore her passion for working with diverse communities, helping people navigate the healthcare system, and gain a deeper understanding of the resources in the Austin area.



Adam Cardenas

Adam grew up in League City, TX and studied at San Jacinto College and Rice University. He is currently a third-year medical student at Dell Medical School at The University of Texas at Austin with professional interests including dermatology, pediatrics, medical education, health systems, and advocacy as it relates to the Latinx and LGBTQ+ communities. To Adam, being a Community Health Champion means constantly altering existing structures and/or completely constructing new ones to maximize health delivery on the pillars of equity, empathy, and excellence.

He hopes to incorporate the knowledge and resources from the program into his future practice as a physician to ensure all patients feel supported becoming their healthiest selves.



Ali Robleh

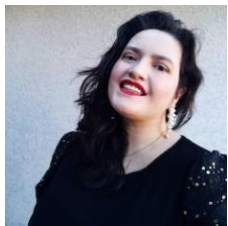
Ali has previously worked to reduce the stigma linked to behavioral health conditions and advocated for greater access to behavioral health services for the underserved population in Santa Clara County, California. He is passionate about promoting a greater understanding of mental health and substance use in his local communities. As a fluent speaker of both Somali and Amharic, Ali primarily worked to support populations who spoke limited English. As a Health Champion, he looks forward to gaining knowledge from the program and using his experiences to empower others.



Amber Orr

With both a law degree and a Master's in Public Health, Amber believes that helping, connecting, and supporting others is what makes her happy and gives life meaning. As a breast cancer survivor, she believes that her experiences have significantly shaped her understanding of the vulnerability of illness and the complexity of our relationship to wellness. A long history of health challenges throughout her life has given her a passion for sharing her journey to encourage and empower others with similar diagnoses, and she believes that access and education can fundamentally impact our ability to thrive.

Amber tends to be a pragmatist and problem solver and wants to have as many tools in her box as possible that she can bring to a challenge. As a Health Champion she's hopeful for an opportunity to pursue answers not only for her own health and purpose, but to learn from others how we might make connections that help bring our community closer to wellbeing together.



Arianna Gomez Lopez

Arianna is a passionate public health professional with a diverse background in global health and a strong commitment to serving underserved populations. She holds a bachelor's degree in Public Health from Baylor University and a Master's in Global Health and Complex Humanitarian Emergencies (CHE) from Emory University.

Having grown up along the Southwest border in Eagle Pass, TX, and Piedras Negras, Mexico, Arianna is driven by a desire to achieve health equity for vulnerable and migrant populations. In her current position as Central Health's Public Health and Policy Specialist, she leads policy

initiatives within Travis County's safety net system to advance health equity.

Arianna's expertise extends from her training as an ORISE fellow and Response Capacity Coordinator at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), where she contributed to the International Taskforce for COVID-19. Combining her professional knowledge in global health and complex humanitarian emergencies with her storytelling abilities, she also delves into critical Church matters that are particularly relevant to underserved communities. Through compelling narratives, she raises awareness and promotes understanding.



Assem Kassymova

Assem is an accomplished Research Coordinator and Program Manager with over eight years of professional experience, including public health research, regulatory compliance, and team leadership. She has a Master's of Public Health in Epidemiology and specializes in Maternal and Child Health. Her passion for public health and equity was sparked by some of her personal and family's adverse health experiences, and she's fueled by a burning desire to help ensure equitable healthcare access. With the knowledge and resources she gains from the

Community Health Champions program, she aims to make a meaningful impact in her community.

Assem aspires to utilize the insights gained during the workshops and collaborative efforts to develop initiatives that promote health and wellness among underserved populations. By leveraging her research coordination skills, program management experience, and the valuable network of like-minded individuals, she hopes to create sustainable solutions that address health disparities and empower individuals to make informed decisions about their health.



Charles Moody III

Charles is currently a project manager for a local Austin non-profit, Community Coalition for Health (C2H.) He graduated from Angelo State University in 2020 with a B.S Management degree and has since been working within the Travis County community. Charles' goal as a Community Health Champion is to further his knowledge of the healthcare system and enable him to develop a variety of skill sets that will help him serve the community more efficiently.

By learning more about Central Health systems and history, he hopes to have a better understanding of the overall mission and become a more effective advocate for equitable

healthcare. Outside of his work in the healthcare field, he has many different hobbies including art, sports, and reading; most of which are utilized through his current work.



Chinyere Okoh

Chinyere is a health outcomes researcher at the University of Texas at Austin. She aims to incorporate the perspectives of patients, caregivers, and providers in health and policy decisions to improve patient health outcomes across healthcare systems. Additionally, she seeks to generate real-world evidence (RWE) to inform drug development and lifecycle management, contributing to evidence-based patient-centric decision-making in healthcare. She enjoys traveling, music, and creative writing!



Christian Kagame

Originally from Africa, Christian moved to Austin in 2014 where he graduated from Huston Tillotson University with a degree in accounting, and Concordia University Texas with a degree in Nursing. He currently works as a Neuro ICU Nurse and is passionate about improving the health and well-being of people around him. As a Community Health Champion, Christian believes he will have a unique opportunity to help others live healthier, happier lives and create a better future for everyone.

With a dedication to making a positive impact on the health of his community, he plans to use the knowledge and resources gained from the program to help everyone he's blessed to take care of on a daily basis.



Danica Fraher

Danica Fraher, LMSW, MPH, is a fierce advocate for health equity and healthcare-housing systems integration. This passion and vision is central in her role as Healthcare Systems Manager at the Ending Community Homelessness Coalition (ECHO), the Austin/Travis County homelessness strategy lead agency. In addition to her present role, which centers on building programs that enhance healthcare and housing systems integration to serve people experiencing homelessness, Danica has eight years of experience in a diverse range of settings (academic, non-profit, for-profit, government).

Prior roles, from intensive case management, advocacy, healthcare curriculum development, and social work clinical lead support, all share the focus of enhancing healthcare access, treatment options, and promoting dignified housing opportunities for underserved individuals in our community.

Danica is grateful for the opportunity to participate in the 2023 Community Health Champions program and looks forward to learning more about what she can do to elevate the health needs and services of our community and connect with other people who have shared values in healthcare access and equity. Her hope is that this program will provide a fertile ground for innovative conversations that promote a collaborative vision for a more person-centered and accessible healthcare system that can be developed and interwoven with the homelessness response system to best serve our community.



Emeka Anyanwu

Emeka has been practicing law as a healthcare attorney for over a decade, spending the vast majority of her career serving as in-house counsel for hospital districts in Texas, Parkland Health in Dallas and now Central Health in Austin. Having spent her entire career working alongside colleagues who share a similar mission to increase access to quality healthcare for patient populations who might otherwise be unable to receive the care they need, Emeka is passionate about being a part of discovering and creating transformative and innovative ways to improve healthcare for all.

She went back to school to supplement what she has learned as a healthcare attorney from an academic perspective and now hopes to delve deeper into opportunities to be a part of making healthcare more accessible and equitable at a local level (and even beyond) by participating in the Community Health Champions program.



Emily De Maria

Emily De Maria is the Executive Director of the Breast Cancer Resource Center (BCRC), a local nonprofit focused on empowering those affected by breast cancer with the personalized support they need to become active and knowledgeable participants in their healthcare journey. BCRC's certified patient navigators are all breast cancer survivor's themselves and all certified community health workers. BCRC's vision is that no one faces breast cancer alone. Emily is passionate about people and community along with women's health and issues of health equity. She has spent her career directing a diverse range of national and local programs and building strategic

partnerships and innovative initiatives that provide measurable results on important community issues. She is active in the community and has served as a Commissioner on the City of Austin's Commission on Aging as a mayoral appointee for the last six years.

Being a Community Health Champion means leveraging her role at BCRC, and her role as a member of this community, to think beyond any one organization or any one health issue, to see the possibilities of working together across the community to eliminate health disparities. With the knowledge and resources she'll gain from the program, Emily believes she will be more equipped to collaborate across the community to achieve greater health equity in Central Texas.



Graciela Gonzalez

Born in Mexico and raised in Austin, Graciela started her healthcare career with CommUnityCare 6 years ago. A primary motivation for her involvement in healthcare is a desire to provide help, resources, and serve those in need in her community. She has worked with passionate healthcare team members in different medical and dental departments throughout the last 6 years. During this time, Graciela has learned that when "we the community" get together, we accomplish more together. With her certification as a medical interpreter and Community Health Worker, she continues to learn new ways to understand and provide the

resources that her community and patients need to ensure the wellbeing of themselves and their families.



Guillermo Zenizo-Lindsey

Guillermo is a Mexican-American Communicator and Journalist, with a bachelor's degree in Communication and Information Sciences and a Master of Science in Organizational Development and Change from Universidad de Monterrey. He also has a Master's in Journalism of Agency from Universidad Rey Juan Carlos and has worked for EFE, Spain's primary news agency. He has experience in educational and non-profit organizations, as well as media outlets. He currently works as a Communications Specialist and Binational Coordinator for the Office of Border Public Health, Texas Department of State Health Services.

Additionally, Guillermo also writes for El Mundo newspaper in Austin. As a Community Health Champion, he would like to learn more about how health disparities can be addressed.



James Baffoe

In 2019, James earned a Doctor of Pharmacy from Cedarville University. His preparation to become a pharmacist afforded him extensive opportunities to work with underserved populations (such as people experiencing homelessness, those living with HIV/AIDS, and those below the federal poverty line) in the United States and Canada. As a student leader, he worked with under-resourced populations in Ohio, Kentucky, and Mississippi to help them navigate the healthcare system in order to obtain their medications. These experiences illuminated health disparities for him, as he observed that some groups are treated differently in terms of accessibility and affordability of healthcare services. This sparked his desire to pursue a doctorate in Health Economics and Outcomes research in order to devise innovative strategies for reducing health disparities.

James is now a doctoral student in the Health Outcome Division of the University of Texas College of Pharmacy. His research applies socio-behavioral theories to pharmacy practices and investigates the impact of racial and cultural safety on individual health outcomes. Currently, he works on a randomized controlled trial that aims to improve the health and social outcomes of homeless individuals by improving care coordination. His experiences (current and past) and research interests provide him with the foundation to comprehend health and the social determinants of health that negatively impact health outcomes. Consequently, he believes that being a part of the Community Health Champion program will enrich and broaden his understanding of how to serve and implement the necessary measures to mitigate health disparities and inequalities.



Jennifer Cavazos

Jennifer has been working at the Health Alliance for Austin Musicians since 2020. She was initially brought on to help with outreach to underserved communities but has had a very dynamic role since starting her job at HAAM, which she believes is very relevant to the past 3 years we have all had as a whole. She has worked directly with Central Health for the past 2 years when troubleshooting Central Health's Premium Assistance Program. Becoming a Community Health Champion will ensure that she can be the best resource to her musicians at HAAM.



Kip Garth

Kip believes that becoming a Community Health Champion will help facilitate his effectiveness as a certified Community Health Worker and provide a more comprehensive understanding that would enhance his work in public health.



Krishna Hariprasad

Krishna is a second-year student at The University of Texas at Austin studying biology and government from San Francisco, California. He's especially passionate about addressing sexual health disparities in the United States and works as a clinical research assistant at Dell Medical School studying urological conditions and treatment options. On campus, he participates in UT's Student Health Advisory Committee, where he has worked to implement sexual education modules for incoming students. He maintains diverse interests ranging from sexual and reproductive health, public policy, and global affairs to hobbies such as playing tennis and kickboxing. Krishna hopes to further his understanding of the intersection of healthcare and patient advocacy by pursuing an MD/JD degree.

To Krishna, being a community health champion means ensuring that patients and the general public have access to a wide range of resources and feel empowered to express their support needs. Through this program, he aims to deepen his understanding of the diverse populations in Travis County and develop effective strategies to address the current community health issues we face.



Latina Freeman

Originally from Ann Arbor, Michigan, Latina recently relocated to Austin in 2022. She has worked in healthcare care for the majority of her career, with much of that time spent with The University of Michigan Hospital. She was formerly an MA specialist, ICU Technician, worked in Patient Services, home health, and managed an adult foster care home, as well as St. Joseph Mercy Hospital Cardiac ICU. She's interested in becoming a Community Health Champion because of her love for helping others; she loves making a difference and considers herself to be a very hardworking and dedicated person. Latina believes there is hope, and one way to show this is by putting a smile on someone's face.

By joining the Community Health Champions program, she hopes to increase her knowledge on how to serve our community more effectively. Working as part of a Home Care Agency, she believes it's important for our community to know that they are there and that they love the people they serve. In her words, "Some of the adults who struggle with day-to-day things don't have people around them that care. They are dealing with things no one knows about, so I want to be the reason someone makes it, the reason they figure it out, or move forward, get better, and prosper. I am looking forward to learning as much as I can to be able to provide the best services that our community needs. Our community needs us, and we need them! "



Leslie Jordan-Garcia

Leslie is a multi-certified ED recovery and fitness professional who is on a mission to dismantle barriers to ED treatment and fitness. She holds dual master's degrees in business administration and public health, with a career across healthcare, education, and non-profit sectors. She feels fortunate to combine her expertise with the additional lived experience at the intersections of binge eating disorder recovery and life in a larger body and loves being the Hype ED Recovery Coach! As a community activist and advocate, being a Community Health Champion would provide the knowledge and community connections to drive positive outcomes for the community at large and underrepresented populations. Being able to help others understand and navigate the resources available to them is key to closing the gap to access and improving the health outcomes of all!



Lorena Sanchez

A resident of Hornsby Bend neighborhoods, Lorena has significant lived experience addressing barriers such as transportation, medical care, and access to healthy food. This drove her to work in the community and support others in addressing barriers to access and care. She has worked with The Cocina Alegre / Happy Kitchen program, which focuses on improving healthy eating within the Latinx community in Central Texas, and she's a certified Community Health Worker since 2003; now working with Austin Public Health on the Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention Program.

As a Community Health Champion, Lorena hopes to gain more skills to continue helping the community strive towards more equitable healthcare and to have better health outcomes.



Megan Owens

Megan is a Medical Social Worker with Austin Public Health and loves what she does. Her position is community based, so she's always out and about in her car, meeting people for appointments, doing home visits, and working with other providers. Her primary job focus is to help connect people who are HIV positive (newly diagnosed or out of care) to medical care. If she's in the office, you'll find her on the 4th floor at the RBJ Health Building. Megan believes that medical care looks a lot of different ways - access to food, shelter, basic needs being met, support, transportation, and access to effective medical care and medications. She looks forward to going through the Community Health Champions program to connect with other people in the community and learn more about resources that are available.

Megan grew up in Austin, and still lives in her childhood neighborhood. She's very interested in continuing to advocate for everyone who has called Austin home, to be able to live here and have access to all the resources they need in order to live healthy lives. A graduate of ACC, UT and Texas State, she has knowledge of a lot of the resources in town and loves the people she's fortunate to work with every day (both her fellow social workers/providers, as well as the people they serve.) She's very proud of her Peace Corps Service in South Africa, where she lived and worked in a small village as a Health Volunteer. She hopes to get back there in the next few years to see how things have changed and reconnect with her host family. In her day-to-day life she loves coffee, ink pens, knitting/quilting and can go on and on about social justice concerns.



Melek Oz

After having her first child in her last year of law school, Melek learned of the gross disparities in health outcomes for Black and brown birthing people and their babies in the states; including in Texas. For the last decade, she has been involved in birth advocacy working to do what she could to support education and access to culturally competent care for people in their prenatal, birth and postpartum period in the central Texas area.

Now retired from birth work, Melek remains passionate about health equity and interested in continuing to be involved in promoting access to healthcare programs and initiatives to support people in optimal health throughout their lifespan.



Michelle Ahmad

Michelle's background is in operations, primarily for community-serving organizations in the education and health spheres. She has been with Central Health for just over a year, and currently works in Service Delivery Operations focusing on specialty services. Michelle is excited to go through the Community Health Champions program to learn more about the health structures, challenges, and opportunities for growth here in Travis County, and to apply that knowledge to her work.



Minh Tri Dinh

Minh Tri is a Quality Assurance and Improvement (QAI) Coordinator for the Texas Vaccines for Children (TVFC). He holds both a Bachelor's Degree in Health Science and a Master of Public Health from San José State University. With over seven years of experience in the field, Tri has covered a diverse range of areas, including Senior Wellness, Violence Prevention, Teen Dating/Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), Sexual Health, Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drugs (ATOD), HIV Outreach, Prevention, and Education (HOPE), Developmental Disabilities, and Public Information, Education and Training (PIET).

Currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Public Health at Walden University, Tri is working on his dissertation researching opioid overdoses in Austin. His research is particularly timely as officials in Travis County have declared a public health crisis due to drug overdoses, which are now the leading cause of accidental deaths in the area, ahead of falls and car crashes.

As a member of the Texas Vaccine for Children (TVFC) IQIP/QAI group, Tri is excited to continue his work in public health and further expand his knowledge in his new role. He brings a wealth of experience and expertise to the team and is dedicated to positively impacting the health and well-being of the community.



Monica Rodriguez

Monica is a Resource Associate for the Central Health Northeast Health Resource Center. She provides resources, appointments for MAP, Central Texas Food Bank appointments, WIC services, diaper bank services, free hygiene and diaper supplies, and free books. Monica would like to have more knowledge of Central Health to better understand and to be able to explain all the services provided, so that she can give to all her clients and community members the most effective information and resources to meet their needs. She loves helping and working with the community.



Narali Macedo

Narali has been working as part of the Central Health system for 6 years, four years at CommUnityCare and now two at Central Health, and she loves being part of a great team. She also has a small excavating business with her husband that they started 5 years ago. In her free time she enjoys going hiking, swimming, spending time with family, and going to museums. To Narali, being a Community Health Champion means getting to learn about the community and going out and giving out information to people in need and inspiring them to take action on improving their health if they are not already. With the knowledge and resources from the program, she hopes to be able to help people get the healthcare they need, as that was a struggle for her growing up and she knows all too well how hard it can be to get in to see a doctor without insurance or transportation.



Nereyda Alonzo

Como Promotora de Salud, siento deber de ayudar a la comunidad hispana n sus necesidades, informándoles, dándoles recursos y también enseñándoles como prevenir enfermedades crónicas, dándoles y educándoles en hacer cambios en su estilo de vida.



Nicholas Perkins

Chief Perkins was appointed the Fire Chief on October 1, 2021. He joined the District in 1998. During his 25-year career with the District he has risen through the ranks becoming a Chief Officer in 2011. He has worked as the Assistant Fire Chief, a Shift Commander, and as the Training Division Chief before being appointed as the Fire Chief.

Chief Perkins graduated from the San Antonio College Fire Academy in 1997 and went on to work on an ambulance for a rural EMS system before joining the District. He has earned an Associates Degree in fire protection technology from Austin Community College in 2001, a Bachelor of Applied Arts and Sciences Degree from Texas State University in 2013, and a Master of Public Administration Degree from the University of Texas at Rio Grande in 2018.

Chief Perkins has managed multiple high-profile incidents, including multi-alarm fires throughout his career. He has a history of developing industry leading community, training, health, and safety programs. He has established and taught fire protection technology programs in central Texas high schools and at the collegiate level. Perkins is a 4th generation Mexican-American, and lives in Travis County with his wife and two sons.

He believes that health care is a human rights issue. In his 25 years working as a firefighter in northeast Travis County, and as a Texas guardsman working in the Rio Grande valley, he has seen too many people who lack basic and adequate healthcare and wants to be part of the solution that brings healthcare to everyone. Chief Perkins believes that learning more about Central Health, and becoming more connected with its mission, will allow him to improve healthcare in the Community.



Nikafareed Papari

Nikafareed is a current undergraduate student studying at the University of Texas at Austin. She's pursuing a major in neuroscience, a psychology minor, and is on a pre-med track headed for medical school. She's active in her community as a volunteer, as well as involved in multiple research projects and non-profit organizations. She's working on creating a more economical and customizable prosthetic limb through academic and hands-on scientific research, as well as increasing the available resources for students facing food insecurity.

As humans, she believes we are part of a whole; if any member of our community is suffering, the entirety of society experiences the consequences. Therefore, she aspires to help implement and lead initiatives that keep the focus on individual patients and how the healthcare system can increase the quality of their lives. Costly treatments,

medical visits, and healthcare plans do not benefit society or help build a healthy community, so she hopes to consult with non-profit organizations and community representatives to eradicate the financial burden of seeking healthcare and provide a better quality of care to all.

In her free time, Nikafareed is an avid martial artist, speaks 3 languages, plays cello, and loves water activities.



Patrice Hatchett

Patrice works as a Community Health Worker II at the City of Austin/Austin Public Health. She's responsible for helping community members and their families navigate and access community services, identify and overcome barriers to care, provide health education, and adopt healthy behaviors. She provides social support and informal counseling, and advocates for member health needs to improve care and health outcomes. As a Community Health Champions, Patrice is interested in serving the community in efforts to bring about living a healthy lifestyle and to support those experiencing inequities and health disparities.



Robin Selman

Robin is a Program Coordinator for HAAM (Health Alliance for Austin Musicians) here in Austin, working with a team to provide increased access to health care for Central Texas musicians. She has a background in program management, financial literacy and taxes, as well as experience with public and private health insurance programs and benefits. As a Community Health Champions, Robin hopes to expand her knowledge and expertise to provide greater value and service to the musicians HAAM assists.



Rocio Lopez-Flores

Rocio is a born and raised Austinite, with a background in public health and social services, and currently serving as the Senior Program Coordinator for the Health Education/Community Health Worker team at Foundation Communities. To Rocio, being a Community Health Champion means that she is becoming one more advocate that can assist in opening the doors to community members who otherwise might have thought doors are closed or are inaccessible to them. She's the daughter of Mexican immigrants and has personal lived experience navigating the complexities of the healthcare system for her parents and would like to use the knowledge she gains from the program to help the community and equip them with the tools needed to navigate and obtain the care they need; realizing barriers CAN be overcome.



Roy Wenmohs

Roy's mission is to save people from dying from overdoses and infectious diseases. He's been licensed as a social worker and has worked at Integral Care for over 22 years. In addition, he's certified as a Community Health Worker. However, as he would put it, "I would prefer to think of myself as a Community Health Champion."

Networking is a big part of Roy's work, and he looks forward to connecting, learning, and growing as an advocate for healthcare equity with all of the people in the 2023 class of Community Health Champions.



Seth Winick

Seth is a partner in a twenty-year-old public and government affairs consultancy, focused primarily on state and federal policy. Outside of building his firm, he's strived to be an active member of the community serving the nonprofit sector (frequently as a board member) with an emphasis on public education, healthcare, and adult literacy. As a Community Health Champion, Seth hopes to deepen his understanding of how we provision healthcare in Travis County, and to learn more about our public hospital district.

Strengthening behavioral health and further integrating these needed services throughout the public system is also critical to our community's future. He wants to help improve the health of our families and neighbors and hopes to be an effective messenger for Central Health and better able to advocate for needed changes or improvements.

Seth is currently Board Vice President of the Literacy Coalition of Central Texas, and a member of the executive committee of Austin Recovery. Active in the Jewish community, Seth is the immediate past president of Temple Beth Shalom. His wife, Joy Baskin, is a nonprofit executive and school law attorney.



Stefan Fehr

Stefan is a licensed clinical social worker and case manager at the South Austin Community Center. He believes that becoming a Community Health Champion will allow him to more effectively assist his clients in accessing high quality health care resources available in Travis County.



Wade Williams

Wade is a Community Health Worker, specializing in the HIV population for CommUnityCare's sexual health team based at the David Powell Clinic. He strives to empower the patients he works with and acknowledge their social determinants of health. As a Community Health Champion, Wade hopes to gain a better understanding of how to more effectively support the patients he works with.