



Sayre Health Center Community Health Assessment

Sarah Dozil (COL 2018)

Advisor: Kent Bream

I had my first meeting with Dr. Bream and his survey team on a rainy Thursday afternoon during finals week. In addition to meeting my team members, I was provided with an outline of an upcoming project. As a part of its five-year plan, the Sayre Health Center wanted to conduct a health survey. The survey aimed to gauge community thoughts on health needs and perceptions about health care. Each student research assistant was responsible for a specific section within the general survey area. I was responsible for surveying homes from 56th to 60th streets from Market Street to Walnut Street. This entailed: initiating conversation with the household members, obtaining informed consent, and conducting the survey through the REDCap app. Overall, we wanted to complete three “waves,” in which every house was knocked on and an attempt was made to get a survey. Needless to say, I was a bit nervous. I had never administered a survey, let alone participated in research. In spite of my nerves, I was excited to begin my summer at Sayre.

The people I met were the highlight of my research experience. While I was shy at first, I learned how to strike up conversation with strangers, which definitely helped me recruit survey participants. I also learned how to properly conduct qualitative interviewing. Even though the survey was conducted on an app on my phone, it was still important to get the most substantial answers in as few words as possible. Learning how to probe and effectively listen was extremely helpful. Outside of research, I learned more about the history and development of West Philadelphia. The people who took time out of their busy days to participate in our survey told interesting stories and gave unique perspectives.

Participating in this project really got me excited about social behavioral research. Upon my arrival to Penn, the word “research” only encompassed the laboratory and its many instruments and techniques. Unfortunately, pipetting and mixing solutions was not my forte. More importantly, I did not find it as intellectually stimulating as my friends did, especially given my experience as a biology major with a minor in anthropology. Finding and participating in this project greatly enhanced my educational experience. Seeing and applying concepts learned in lecture makes me excited to learn more.