The Role of Play Streets in Fulfilling Community Health Needs
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This summer through PURM I had the opportunity to work at Sayre Health Center at 59th and Locust. At Sayre, I helped them with their Community Needs Assessment, which is a survey done with community members to determine what the community needs in terms of health. In turn, the results will inform the health center’s strategic plan for the next five years. For the first part of the summer, I was helping with data collection, which meant going out every day and knocking on doors trying to get people to take the survey. While this was indeed very difficult in the hot weather, when I did get a survey it opened my eyes to viewpoints I may never have seen before. It made me realize the difficulties of living in such a high poverty neighborhood and how difficult it can be to access health foods without a grocery store nearby or basic health care without insurance. At the end of the summer, I was able to delve more deeply into my own research interests. While doing surveys, I came across what was known as a play street, which is a street that is shut off to traffic during the day so the kids can play safely. Lunches are also often provided for the kids though a city program. I found this idea very interesting, as this program seemed to fulfill lots of the health needs I noticed people talking about in their surveys. To get a better understanding of the social benefits of play streets for the community, I chose to interview a woman who ran a play street. After the interview, I situated her stated benefits within the health needs of the larger community that we found through our survey. All in all, my summer at Sayre Health Center gave me an opportunity to see firsthand what public health research looks like in practice, which I greatly appreciated as that is the field I hope to one day work in.