Guardian Engagement
by: Morgan Ames, Sandy Fulker Schaeffer, Lindsey Hammergren, Alex Hahn, Nico Francine, Priyanka Joshi, Miranda Kuwahara, Natalie Thom

About us...
Morgan, MPH Health Policy
I chose Guardian Engagement because I wanted improve health awareness among parents and work to connect them with proper resources in the Anacostia (and DC) community.

Nico, BS Chemistry
I chose Guardian Engagement because I wanted to learn about how parents address their children’s health needs and how interventions could better their family’s health.

Sandy, MPH (Community Oriented Primary Care) and Physician Assistant
I am hoping to become a parent soon, and I thought Guardian Engagement would be a great way to begin thinking more about parenting and early childhood education.

Lindsey, MPH Health Promotion
I chose Guardian Engagement because children are our future, and I feel a responsibility to ensure their health for the rest of their lives.

Alex, MPH Health Policy
I chose Guardian Engagement because parents and guardians play an important role in determining the health of future generations, and I wanted to make an impact in the often neglected neighborhoods of DC.

Priyanka, MD (Community/Urban Health Track)
I chose Guardian Engagement because I want to be an advocate for inner-city children and I wanted to learn more about empowering parents to ensure children’s success from an early age.

Miranda, MPH Health Policy
I chose Guardian Engagement to work with multiple generations of families to keep kids healthy and happy.

Natalie, MSPH Microbiology and Emerging Infectious Diseases
I chose Guardian Engagement because I am interested in child development and wanted to work with parents/guardians, who I believe have one of the greatest impacts on the health/development of their child - especially during the first years of life.

Southeast Children’s Fund Guardians are...
Parents, grandparents, and family members of the children, aged 6 weeks to 3 years old, enrolled at SCF.

SCF Families live or work in the Anacostia neighborhood...
...one of the first suburbs of Washington, Frederick Douglass, an abolitionist and the “sage of Anacostia”, lived in the neighborhood for most of his life. The area was predominantly white (87%) until the 1960s, when the Anacostia Freeway was constructed and imposed a barrier between the neighborhood and the waterfront. Coinciding with the Civil Rights Movement and the 1968 race riots, white flight sent middle class white Americans deeper into the suburbs and out of the Anacostia area. Public housing apartment complexes were erected and the neighborhood shifted demographically to predominantly African American (as of the 2000 census, 92%). The neighborhood has limited access to shopping, dining, and entertainment facilities, as development slowed with a decrease in income of the local residents. Crime rates, much of which was associated with drug trade and usage, peaked in the 90s. In 2006, the Town Hall Education Arts Recreation Campus (THEARC) opened to house nonprofit organizations with the goal of helping children and adults in the area reach their full potential, including a Children’s National Medical Center location. Southeast Children’s Fund is within close walking distance of the Anacostia metro station, the Big Chair, and in the same building as the Salvation Army’s Solomon G. Browd Corps Community Center.

Why Early Childhood Interventions?
● Early childhood development is considered to be the most important phase in life which determines the quality of health, well-being, learning and behavior across the lifespan (WHO).
● The course that development takes in each person depends critically on the quality of stimulation, support and nurturance that a child experiences in their family, neighborhood, & care environments.
● We sought to empower parents and provide resources so their children can develop and succeed appropriately.
● Our starter project focused on increasing compliance with the Universal Health Certificate, which includes key information on overall health, vaccines, and developmental goals.

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Recommendations
● Establish a formalized, open presence: get a tablecloth, poster, banner, other visibility tools
● Keep an open mind: about your community, your teammates, about the ISCOPEs process
● Collaborate with the teachers and staff members more. They’re wonderful resources and allies. They know the guardians, and they will see your consistent presence. They will help establish trust.
● Find out early what each team member brings to the table, what motivates them, and how they like to work/collaborate
● Consider how you will define success. Engagement is an open-ended timeline, and may not lend itself to deliverables. The process may be more important than the end “results”
● Have fun!

Lessons Learned
What is the most important thing you learned from each other and from the people you served?
○ Keep an open mind! Don’t jump to conclusions and assumptions about what the guardians at SCF know, where there may be a knowledge gap, and what topics are on their minds.
○ Be aware of your own biases, and how your upbringing and education have shaped you. Be willing to learn and grow.

What does it mean to engage in interprofessional team-based service?
○ We each brought insights from our respective fields, and sought to embrace all experiences and expertise. We also brought our hobbies, passions, and interests to this experience.
○ Communication is key: we learned new skills, utilized each other’s technology strengths, and recognized differences. We’re now experts at GroupMe!
○ Understand other’s priorities: not everyone will respond as quickly as you want, be as enthusiastic as you want, and have as much time as you want. We learned to manage expectations and adapt.

How will we use this knowledge and these skills in our future careers?
ISCOPES has taught us to:
○ Connect with professionals and lay folks of different disciplines
○ Work long-term with a team on a continuous effort, not always deadline driven
○ Set aside our assumptions about projects, willingness to adapt and change
○ Understand other’s intrinsic motivations, skills, interests, expertise, and use them to delegate tasks.

THANK YOU!
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Thank you to all the families at SCF for talking with us, teaching us, and allowing us to hang out with your amazing children!
Thank you to Shay and Meghan for your contribution in the group!