

Louisiana and Reproductive Justice: Bridging Gaps Through Research

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This fall, I had the privilege of continuing my internship with Midwest Access Project (MAP) for a third term, diving deeper into work that aligns with my passion for reproductive justice. This semester, I focused on a pivotal project: researching the legal and systemic barriers affecting sexual and reproductive health (SRH) in Louisiana. These barriers, such as lack of access and resources needed, contribute to the state's high maternal and infant mortality rates and the strictest abortion restrictions in the country. This work holds profound importance.

My primary task was to create a comprehensive Louisiana-specific research document that ties the legal context of SRH to MAP's mission. This involved gathering statistics and policies from the Guttmacher Institute and state health reports. Through this research, I examined how systemic issues—such as the state's low healthcare access rankings and abortion travel estimates—directly impact individuals, especially those from marginalized communities. One of the project's key deliverables was the development of a one-pager designed to concisely inform stakeholders about Louisiana's SRH landscape. Sections included a "Why Invest in Louisiana" segment highlighting the critical need for resources and advocacy in a state with stark health disparities, a "Louisiana Legal Landscape" section summarizing restrictive reproductive laws and their implications for abortion access and maternal health, and an "Opportunities & Strengths" section showcasing innovative local leadership and advocacy efforts despite systemic challenges.

In addition to my research, I also took on creative projects to expand MAP's outreach efforts. This semester, I started developing awareness posts for their Instagram stories to bring attention to social justice issues tied to reproductive health. For example, I created posts for Trans Awareness Week, emphasizing the importance of inclusive care, and International Menopause Day, highlighting the unique needs of people navigating menopause. These posts served to engage MAP's audience and demonstrate the organization's commitment to addressing diverse experiences within reproductive justice. Through this work, I gained a deeper understanding of how intersecting issues like poverty, race, and access to care compound the barriers faced by individuals seeking SRH services in Louisiana. The most rewarding part of this work was seeing how MAP leverages this data and advocacy to drive meaningful change.

Looking ahead to the spring, I'm excited to continue refining this research and developing actionable materials that support MAP's mission. It's been incredibly fulfilling to contribute to an organization so committed to advancing equity and accessibility in reproductive health care. Through my research and outreach efforts, I've learned that both data and creative engagement are powerful tools for amplifying voices and creating meaningful change. I look forward to continuing this journey with MAP and furthering our shared vision of reproductive justice.