



Karissa Propson, M.S.W.

Senior Consultant, The Improve Group

Karissa enjoys understanding how programs and policies work at the micro-level while also thinking about the big picture; to do this, she applies her skills in synthesizing complex information into coherent answers to important questions. Outside of work, Karissa enjoys patios in the summer, good books in the winter, and quality time with her dog year-round.

Expertise

Evaluation

Karissa applies skills in quantitative analysis and research to evaluation, while also leveraging her educational background in social work. Her ability to focus on details while also thinking about the big picture is especially useful in evaluations of complex initiatives with multiple stakeholders. She focuses on ensuring evaluation is useful and used through close engagement with stakeholders; strong, clear writing; and effective data visualization.

Consulting

By working with clients to consider evaluation from the viewpoints of different stakeholders, Karissa ensures evaluation is meaningful and useful. She encourages identifying and addressing the root needs and concerns driving an evaluation, as well as positioning a client's work within the larger systems at play.

Early childhood and education

Before becoming an evaluator, Karissa worked with Early Head Start providing home visits to children aged 0-3 and their families to enhance parent-child relationships and support healthy child development. She also served as a researcher with the Social Kids Lab, which focuses on infant and child development, and as an intern with the Wisconsin Alliance for Infant Mental Health. Karissa has supported several projects related to early childhood, including evaluating a project studying local collaboratives' implementation of efforts to ensure children in Michigan are born healthy, thrive through their early years, and are prepared to succeed.

Professional Experience

The Improve Group | St. Paul, MN | Senior Consultant | 2020-present | Plan, lead, and execute project activities to make the most of information, navigate complexity, and ensure clients' investments of time and money lead to meaningful, sustained impact. Project experience includes:

Leading stakeholder engagement for the Minnesota Department of Human Services to gather feedback from people with disabilities and other stakeholders about a project to transform Minnesota's disability waiver services.

Supporting a multi-year evaluation of Minnesota's Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation System to determine the training and consultation system's impacts on providers' capacity to support children's emotional development and prevent or reduce mental health challenges.

Partnering with the Kansas Health Foundation to evaluate an early literacy initiative that uses a collective impact model in funding community-level efforts to support academic success and, ultimately, improve health. This work involves an initiative-level evaluation and grantee technical assistance on evaluation and collective impact.

Sharing relevant data in an easy-to-understand format to support data-informed decisions on victim services funding across North Dakota.

The Improve Group | St. Paul, MN | Associate Consultant | 2018-2020 | Worked collaboratively with project team to execute activities.

Public Policy Associates, Inc. | Lansing, MI | Research Associate | 2016-18 | Conducted quantitative and qualitative research to help clients make better decisions and create better public policy.

Kids Forward (formerly Wisconsin Council on Children and Families) | Madison, WI | Policy Analysis Intern | 2015-16 | Analyzed data and made recommendations for policies that support children and families.

Early Head Start at Dane County Parent Council | Madison, WI | Home Visiting Program Intern | 2014-15 | Planned and carried out curriculum-based activities to enhance parent-child relationships and encourage healthy child development.

Social Kids Lab at the University of Wisconsin-Madison | Madison, WI | Associate Research Specialist | 2013-14 | Supported graduate students and staff in a research laboratory focused on infant and child development, specifically involving social categories, prejudice, and stereotyping.

Education

University of Wisconsin-Madison | Master of Social Work with a focus in Child, Youth, and Family Welfare, Policy and Administration

University of Wisconsin-Madison | Bachelor of Science in Human Development and Family Studies, Psychology

Training

Technology of Participation® Facilitation Methods | Institute of Cultural Affairs in the U.S.A.

Technology of Participation® Strategic Planning | Institute of Cultural Affairs in the U.S.A.

Professional Affiliations

American Evaluation Association

Minnesota Evaluation Association