

Amanda Spishak-Thomas

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Academic Positions

- 2025 – present **Affiliate Faculty Member**
Hub for Aging Collaboration
School of Social Work
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, New Brunswick
New Brunswick, NJ
- 2024 – present **Assistant Research Professor**
Center for State Health Policy
Institute for Health, Health Care Policy and Aging Research
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, New Brunswick
New Brunswick, NJ
- 2023 – 2024 **Post-Doctoral Medicaid Research Scholar**
Center for State Health Policy
Institute for Health, Health Care Policy and Aging Research
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, New Brunswick
New Brunswick, NJ

Education

- 2023 **Columbia School of Social Work, New York, NY**
Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)
Concentration: Social Policy and Policy Analysis, Economics

Dissertation: Grave Robbers: Medicaid Estate Recovery and its (Un)intended Consequences on Low-Income Families

Committee: Heidi Allen (Sponsor), Jane Waldfogel (Chair), Julien Teitler, Sarah Cohodes, Emma Sandoe
- 2020 **Columbia School of Social Work, New York, NY**
Master of Philosophy (MPhil)
- 2013 **Columbia School of Social Work, New York, NY**
Master of Science in Social Work (M.S.S.W.) – Advanced Clinical Practice, Health, Mental Health, & Disabilities
- 2012 **Seattle University, Seattle, WA**
Bachelor of Social Work (B.S.W.) – Departmental Honors & Nonprofit Leadership, *Magna Cum Laude*

Professional Licensure

Licensed Clinical Social Worker, State of California (license #73927)

Fellowships and Honors

- 2025 **Nominated for AcademyHealth 2025 Annual Research Meeting Best Poster for:** “The Association of Medicaid Estate Recovery with Homeownership and Medicaid Enrollment”
- 2023 **Received Best of AcademyHealth 2023 Annual Research Meeting for:** “When the Bough Breaks: Financial Burdens in the Postpartum Period by Insurance Type”

2023	Commencement Student Speaker , Columbia School of Social Work
2022-2023	Horowitz Foundation Award , Horowitz Foundation for Social Policy (\$7,500)
2022-2023	Ruth Fisdale Dissertation Support Program , Columbia School of Social Work (\$5,000)
2022	Student Award for Leadership and Service , Group for the Advancement of Doctoral Education in Social Work (\$1,500)
2019-2023	Doctoral Student Travel Grant , Columbia School of Social Work (\$1,000 annually)
2019-2022	Doctoral Summer Research Funding , Columbia School of Social Work (\$7,500 annually)
2018-2023	Doctoral Fellowship , Columbia School of Social Work (\$32,000 annually)

Peer-Reviewed Publications

1. **Spishak-Thomas, A.**, Sandoe, E., Howard, H. (2025). Lots of Pain for Little Gain: Three Decades of Medicaid Estate Recovery. *Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law*. (Forthcoming)
2. **Spishak-Thomas, A.**, Slopen, M., Daw, J., Liu, C., Underhill, K., Allen, H. (2025). Time to Recover and Bond: The Relationship Between State PFL Policies and Postpartum Leave Taking. *Social Service Review*, 99(3).
<https://doi.org/10.1086/736406>
3. McGovern, M.E., Treglia, D., Eliason, E.L., **Spishak-Thomas, A.**, Cantor, J.C. (2024). Homelessness and Maternal and Infant Health. *JAMA Network Open*, 7(11). <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2024.42596>
4. Allen, H., **Spishak-Thomas, A.**, Underhill, K., Liu, C., Daw, J. (2024). When the Bough Breaks: The Financial Burden of Childbirth and Postpartum Care by Insurance Type. *The Milbank Quarterly*, 102(4), 868-895.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-0009.12721>
5. **Spishak-Thomas, A.** (2024). Medicaid Enrollment and Intergenerational Transfers of Wealth among Older Adults. *The Gerontologist*, 64(7). <https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/gnae074>
6. Eliason, E.L., **Spishak-Thomas, A.**, Steenland, M. (2022). Association of the Affordable Care Act Medicaid Expansions with Postpartum Contraceptive Use and Early Postpartum Pregnancy. *Contraception*, 113, 42-48.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.contraception.2022.02.012>
7. Kaplan, D. B., Silverstone, B., Chan, K., **Spishak-Thomas, A.**, Herman, C., Zlotnik, J. L. (2022). NASW's Supervisory Leaders in Aging: One-Year Practice Change Outcomes of an Innovative Training Program for Social Work Supervisors. *Gerontology and Geriatrics Education*, 44(3), 364-379.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02701960.2022.2028260>

Manuscripts Under Review

1. **Spishak-Thomas, A.**, Eliason, E.L. "Barriers and Needs for Postpartum Contraception: A Mixed Methods Study"
2. **Spishak-Thomas, A.**, Sandoe, E., Howard, H. "Understanding Medicaid Estate Recovery: The Experience of North Carolina and Policy Implications for Future Reforms"

Invited and Peer-Reviewed Presentations

*presented by coauthor

1. **Spishak-Thomas, A.**, Greenhalgh-Stanley, N. The Association of Medicaid Estate Recovery with Homeownership and Medicaid Enrollment. Poster Presentation. AcademyHealth Annual Research Meeting, Minneapolis, MN, 2025.
2. **Spishak-Thomas, A.**, Eliason, E.L. Barriers and Needs for Postpartum Contraception during COVID-19: A Mixed Methods Study. Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management, National Harbor, MD, 2024.
3. **Spishak-Thomas, A.**, Sandoe, E., Howard, H. Understanding Medicaid Estate Recovery: The Experience of North Carolina and Policy Implications for Future Reforms. Poster Presentation. AcademyHealth Annual Research Meeting, Baltimore, MD, 2024.

4. **Spishak-Thomas, A.** Medicaid Enrollment and Intergenerational Transfers of Wealth among Older Adults. Poster Presentation. Population Association of America, Columbus, OH, 2024.
5. **Spishak-Thomas, A.**, Slopen, M.,* Allen, H., Daw, J., Underhill, K. The Role of State PFML Policies in Determining Length and Composition of Parental Leave. Society for Social Work and Research, Washington, D.C., 2024.
6. Allen, H.,* **Spishak-Thomas, A.**, Liu, C., Underhill, K., Daw, J. When the Bough Breaks: Financial Burdens in the Postpartum Period by Insurance Type. AcademyHealth Annual Research Meeting, Seattle, WA, 2023.
7. **Spishak-Thomas, A.**, Toppenberg, L., Sonsteng-Person, M., Lob, S., Bonilla, P. Can't Fight Poverty in Poverty: Organizing for Equity in Social Work. Roundtable. Society for Social Work and Research, Phoenix, AZ, 2023.
8. **Spishak-Thomas, A.** Grave Robbers: Medicaid Estate Recovery and Wealth Disparities in Intergenerational Financial Health. Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management, Washington, D.C., 2022.
9. **Spishak-Thomas, A.**, Allen, H. The Association of the Medicaid Estate Recovery Program with Homeownership. Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management, Austin, TX, 2022.
10. Eliason, E.L., **Spishak-Thomas, A.** Impacts of the Affordable Care Act Medicaid Expansions on Closely Spaced Pregnancies and Postpartum Contraceptive Use. Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management, Austin, TX, 2022.
11. Eliason, E.L.,* **Spishak-Thomas, A.** Association Between Affordable Care Act Medicaid Expansions and Breastfeeding among Low-Income Women. Poster Presentation. American Public Health Association Annual Meeting, 2021 (online).
12. **Spishak-Thomas, A.**, Aivadyan, C. 'So many disincentives to take care of ourselves': A Photovoice Study on Graduate Student Workers' Health Care Experiences. Poster Presentation. Society for Social Work and Research, San Francisco, CA, 2021 (online).
13. **Spishak-Thomas, A.**, Slopen, M. Making Work Pay (the Rent): Does the Earned Income Tax Credit Affect Housing Mobility among Low Income Workers. Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management, Washington, D.C., 2020 (online).
14. Kaplan, D.B., Silverstone, B., Chan, K., **Spishak-Thomas, A.** NASW's Supervisory Leaders in Aging: One-year Practice Change Outcomes of an Innovative Training Program for Social Work Supervisors. Gerontological Society of America, Philadelphia, PA, 2020 (online).
15. Allen, H., Zhang, Y., Eliason, E.L., **Spishak-Thomas, A.**, Frankel, C. Adverse Childhood Experiences and their Relationship with Depression among Adults in a Low-Income Uninsured Population. Society for Social Work and Research, Washington, D.C., 2020.
16. Price E.,* Garg M., **Spishak-Thomas A.**, Crevensten H., Ranji, S. "Doctor, Your Patient Wants to Leave": Navigating Elopement Risk in Patients Who Lack Decision Making Capacity. Workshop at Society of Hospital Medicine National Meeting, Orlando, FL, 2018.

Academic Review Experience

Ad-Hoc Journal Reviewer

Health Affairs, BMC Public Health, Families in Society, The Milbank Quarterly, Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved, The Gerontologist, Journal of Women's Health

Previous Research Experience

2020 – 2023 **Doctoral Research Assistant**, Columbia World Projects

Leveraging Medicaid in the “Fourth Trimester”: A Path to Averting Maternal Mortality and Morbidity in the U.S.

PIs: Heidi Allen, Jamie Daw, Kristen Underhill

- 2021 **Doctoral Research Assistant**, Columbia School of Social Work
Elective Deliveries
PIs: Julien Teitler, Nancy Reichman
- 2018 – 2021 **Doctoral Research Assistant**, Columbia School of Social Work
The Earned Income Tax Credit and the Health of Adults without Dependent Children: A Randomized Controlled Trial
PIs: Heidi Allen, Peter Meunnig
- 2019 – 2020 **Doctoral Research Assistant**, Columbia School of Social Work
Evaluating the Health Effects of Insurance-Subsidized Health Foods at Walmart
PI: Heidi Allen
- 2018 – 2020 **Doctoral Research Assistant**, Adelphi University
Strengthening Social Work Leaderships and Gerontological Capacity on the Front Lines of Service to Older Adults
PIs: Daniel Kaplan, Barbara Silverstone

Teaching Experience

Instructor

- 2021 Columbia School of Social Work
Advocacy: Decolonizing Mezzo- and Macro-practice in Social Work

Guest lecturer

- 2025 Columbia School of Social Work
Advocacy: Decolonizing Mezzo- and Macro-practice in Social Work, “Labor Organizing”
- 2023 Rutgers University Health Sciences
Introduction to Implementation Science and Program Evaluation, “Dissemination and Sustainability”
- 2020 Columbia School of Social Work
Social Welfare Policy, “U.S. Health Policy”
- 2020 Columbia School of Social Work
Human Behavior in the Social Environment, “Social Ties, Social Support, and Behavior”
- 2020 Columbia School of Social Work
Program Evaluation in Social Services, “Dissemination and Sustainability”
- 2019 Hunter College Silberman School of Social Work
Seminar in Social Welfare Policy II: Health and Mental Health Systems, “Health Policy Advocacy and Political Social Work”

Teaching Assistant/Associate

- 2020 Columbia School of Social Work
Human Behavior in the Social Environment
- 2020 Columbia School of Social Work
Social Welfare Policy

2020 Columbia School of Social Work
Seminar on Policy Practice II

Pedagogical Trainings

2019 Senior Teaching Mentor for the Summer Health Profession Education Program (SHPEP),
Columbia University Irving Medical Center

2019 Inclusive Teaching Training, Columbia Center for Teaching and Learning

Clinical Social Work Experience

2015 – 2018 **U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, San Francisco, CA**
Inpatient Medical/Surgical and Oncology Social Worker

- Collaborated with an interdisciplinary team of hospitalists, residents, medical students, nurses, pharmacists, and other social workers to provide safe and appropriate discharge plans for Veterans.
- Provided Veterans and their families with psychosocial support, housing resources, substance use treatment, and long-term care planning.
- Advocated for Veterans with food insecurity, inadequate housing, mental health diagnoses including PTSD and substance use disorders and provided supportive counseling and ongoing follow-up.
- Developed and launched a new model (iPACT) for working with health care providers across disciplines through a grant designed to teach physicians how to work within an interdisciplinary team.
- Active membership on the nutrition committee, dementia committee, and transitions of care/care of complex patients committee as a social work representative and patient advocate.
- Coordinated a weekly hospital leadership meeting discussing policy changes and discharge planning issues on a macro scale.
- Served as a Field Instructor for a San Jose State MSW intern for the 2017-2018 school year; completed 29 hours of continuing education and training in field instruction and supervision.

2013 – 2015 **CPMC Ray Dolby Brain Health Center, San Francisco, CA**
Family Care Specialist

- Coordinated with an interdisciplinary team to connect families to community resources such as home care, adult day care, elder law attorneys, meal delivery, and long-term care facilities.
- Provided consultation and supportive therapy to individuals and families.
- Conducted needs assessments, care planning, and resource referrals.

2013 – 2015 **Alzheimer's Association, San Jose, CA**
Family Care Specialist

- Facilitated support groups for both people diagnosed with Alzheimer's and their caregivers.
- Organized and planned educational workshops for recently diagnosed individuals and caregivers to learn more about brain health, research updates, and caregiving skills.
- Advocated and raised awareness about Alzheimer's and the resources available in the community.

Academic Service and Policy Practice

2025 **2025 Candidate Cohort**, For the People: A Leftist Library Project

2025 **Innovation Incubator**, Society for Social Work and Research

2023 **Search Committee Member**, Rutgers Center for State Health Policy

2023 – Present **Business Affairs and Licenses Committee Chair**, Brooklyn Community Board 6, Office of the Brooklyn Borough President

2022 – Present	Appointed Member of Brooklyn Community Board 6 , Office of the Brooklyn Borough President
2021 – 2022	Bargaining Committee Representative , Student Workers of Columbia-UAW Local 2710
2021 – 2023	Social Work Representative , Columbia University PhD Council
2021	Abstract Reviewer , Council on Social Work Education 67 th Annual Program Meeting
2020 – 2023	Doctoral Student Peer Mentor , Peer-to-Peer Doctoral Student Mentoring Program, Columbia School of Social Work
2020 – Present	Support Group Facilitator , Alzheimer’s Association of New York City
2020 – 2021	Founding Member , Doctoral Student Task Force, Columbia School of Social Work
2020	Selected Student Representative , Doctoral Program Orientation, Columbia School of Social Work
2019 – 2022	Advocacy Collective , Planned Parenthood of Greater New York
2019	Political Boot Camp , Congressional Research Institute for Social Work and Policy
2018 – 2023	Health Care Working Group , Student Workers of Columbia-UAW Local 2710
2016 – 2017	Leadership Development Institute , San Francisco Department of Veterans Affairs
2015 – 2018	Support Group Facilitator , Alzheimer’s Association of Northern California/Northern Nevada

Professional Organization Memberships

AcademyHealth

Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management

Society of Social Work and Research