Amanda Spishak-Thomas

Rutgers Center for State Health Policy
112 Paterson Street
New Brunswick, NJ 08901

aspishakthomas.com
a.spishak.thomas@ifh.rutgers.edu
(714) 343-7566

ACADEMIC POSITIONS

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey—New Brunswick
Assistant Research Professor, Center for State Health Policy 2024 -
- Faculty Affiliate, Hub for Aging Collaboration, School of Social Work 2025 -
- Faculty Affiliate, Institute for Health, Health Care Policy and Aging Research 2023 -

Post-Doctoral Medicaid Research Scholar, Center for State Health Policy 2023-2024

EDUCATION

Ph.D., Columbia School of Social Work, New York, NY 2023
Social Policy and Policy Analysis, Economics
Dissertation: Grave Robbers: Medicaid Estate Recovery and its (Un)intended Consequences on Low-Income Families

MPhil, Columbia School of Social Work, New York, NY 2020

M.S.S.W., Columbia School of Social Work, New York, NY 2013
Advanced Clinical Practice, Health, Mental Health, & Disabilities

B.S.W., Seattle University, Seattle, WA 2012
Departmental Honors & Nonprofit Leadership, *Magna Cum Laude*

PROFESSIONAL LICENSURE

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

PUBLICATIONS

Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles

1. **Spishak-Thomas, A.**, Sandoe, E., Howard, H. (2026). Understanding Medicaid Estate Recovery: The Experience of North Carolina and Policy Implications for Future Reforms. *Health Services Research, 61*(3). https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6773.70141

2. **Spishak-Thomas, A.**, Eliason, E.L. (2026). Barriers and Needs for Postpartum Contraception. *Maternal and Child Health, 30*, 681-691. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10995-026-04265-0

3. **Spishak-Thomas, A.** (2026). The Association of Medicaid Estate Recovery with Homeownership, Home Equity, and Medicaid Enrollment. *The Milbank Quarterly, 104*(3). https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-0009.70087

4. **Spishak-Thomas, A.**, Sandoe, E., Howard, H. (2026). Lots of Pain for Little Gain: Three Decades of Medicaid Estate Recovery. *Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law, 51*(1), 101-119. https://doi.org/10.1215/03616878-12166749

5. **Spishak-Thomas, A.**, Slopen, M., Daw, J., Liu, C., Underhill, K., Allen, H. (2025). Time to Recover and Bond: The Relationship Between State Paid Family Leave Policies and Postpartum Leave Taking. *Social Service Review, 99*(3), 537-559. https://doi.org/10.1086/736406

6. 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

7. 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

8. **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

9. 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

10. 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

Under Review

11. Cantor, J.C., Farnham, J., Palatucci, J., **Spishak-Thomas, A.**, Agrawal, M., Chakravarty, S., Lloyd, K., Pizzi, L. Prioli, K.M., Nasiri, M. "Examining the Effect of the NJ FamilyCare Comprehensive Demonstration on Access to Care, Quality, and Cost of Care: Summative Evaluation Report"

Select Works in Progress

12. Cantor, J.C., Farnham, J., Palatucci, J.S., **Spishak-Thomas, A.**, Samples, H., Treglia, D., Nguyen, A.M., Minkowitz, C., Lilly, A. Examining the Effect of the NJ FamilyCare Comprehensive Demonstration on Access to Care, Quality, and Cost of Care: Interim Evaluation Report.

13. **Spishak-Thomas, A.**, Perry, M. Medicaid Estate Recovery: Is There Value to Keeping it "In House"?

14. Perry, M., **Spishak-Thomas, A.** Characterizing Variation in Medicaid Estate Recovery Hardship Waiver Policies.

15. **Spishak-Thomas, A.** Privatizing Public Insurance: Managed Care Delivery in Long-Term Services and Supports.

16. Slopen, M., **Spishak-Thomas, A.** Menopause and Work for Women in Midlife.

Policy Reports and Blogs

1. **Spishak-Thomas, A.**, Oh, A. (2025). *Analysis of the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) Continuous Coverage Provision to Examine Enrollment and Access to Care and Quality*. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. https://www.medicaid.gov/medicaid/section-1115-demonstrations/downloads/nj-familycare-comp-demo-cov19-phe-finl-rpt.pdf

2. **Spishak-Thomas, A.**, Oh, A. "Covering Uninsured Children: State Solutions for Immigrant Children." *Milbank Memorial Fund.* September 15, 2025. https://www.milbank.org/2025/09/covering-uninsured-children-state-solutions-for-immigrant-children/

CURRENT FUNDING

Co-Investigator 2025-2027
National Institutes of Health (NIH) Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD)

Impact of Homelessness and Housing Services on Maternal and Infant Health (R01HD118152, $1,317,340)

PAST GRANTS AND FELLOWSHIPS

Horowitz Foundation Award, Horowitz Foundation for Social Policy ($7,500)	2022-2023
Ruth Fizdale Dissertation Support Program, Columbia School of Social Work ($5,000)	2022-2023
Doctoral Student Travel Grant, Columbia School of Social Work ($1,000 annually)	2019-2023
Doctoral Summer Research Funding, Columbia School of Social Work ($7,500 annually)	2019-2022
Doctoral Fellowship, Columbia School of Social Work ($32,000 annually)	2018-2023

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

Nominated for AcademyHealth 2025 Annual Research Meeting Best Poster for:	2025
"The Association of Medicaid Estate Recovery with Homeownership and Medicaid Enrollment"	
Received Best of AcademyHealth 2023 Annual Research Meeting for:	2023
"When the Bough Breaks: Financial Burdens in the Postpartum Period by Insurance Type"	
Commencement Student Speaker, Columbia School of Social Work	2023
Student Award for Leadership and Service, GADE Social Work ($1,500)	2022

CONFERENCE 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.

INVITED TALKS AND PANELS

Spishak-Thomas, A. "Medicaid Waiver for Long-Term Services & Supports in New Jersey". Rutgers Roundtable on Aging & State Policy in New Jersey. March 2026.

ACADEMIC REVIEW EXPERIENCE

Ad-Hoc Journal Reviewer

Health Affairs, The Milbank Quarterly, The Gerontologist, Journal of Women's Health, Pediatrics, BMC Public Health, Families in Society, Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved, Health Equity, Journal of Empirical Legal Studies, BioMed Research International

Abstract Reviewer

State-University Partnership Learning Network Annual Fall Meeting, Council on Social Work Education 67th Annual Program Meeting

PREVIOUS RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Doctoral Research Assistant, Columbia World Projects 2020-2023
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

Doctoral Research Assistant, Columbia School of Social Work 2021
Elective Deliveries
PIs: Julien Teitler, Nancy Reichman

Doctoral Research Assistant, Columbia School of Social Work 2018-2021
The Earned Income Tax Credit and the Health of Adults without Dependent Children: A Randomized Controlled Trial
PIs: Heidi Allen, Peter Meunnig

Doctoral Research Assistant, Columbia School of Social Work 2019-2020
Evaluating the Health Effects of Insurance-Subsidized Health Foods at Walmart
PI: Heidi Allen

Doctoral Research Assistant, Adelphi University 2018-2020
Strengthening Social Work Leaderships and Gerontological Capacity on the Front Lines of Service to Older Adults
PIs: Daniel Kaplan, Barbara Silverstone

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Instructor

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

Guest lecturer

Columbia School of Social Work 2025 & 2026
Advocacy: Decolonizing Mezzo- and Macro-practice in Social Work, "Labor Organizing"

Rutgers University Health Sciences 2023
Introduction to Implementation Science and Program Evaluation, "Dissemination and Sustainability"

Columbia School of Social Work 2020
Social Welfare Policy, "U.S. Health Policy"

Columbia School of Social Work 2020
Human Behavior in the Social Environment, "Social Ties, Social Support, and Behavior"

Columbia School of Social Work 2020
Program Evaluation in Social Services, "Dissemination and Sustainability"

Hunter College Silberman School of Social Work 2019
Seminar in Social Welfare Policy II: Health and Mental Health Systems, "Health Policy Advocacy and Political Social Work"

Teaching Assistant/Associate

Columbia School of Social Work 2020
Human Behavior in the Social Environment

Columbia School of Social Work 2020
Social Welfare Policy

Columbia School of Social Work 2020
Seminar on Policy Practice II

Pedagogical Trainings

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

Inclusive Teaching Training, Columbia Center for Teaching and Learning 2019

CLINICAL SOCIAL WORK EXPERIENCE

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, San Francisco, CA 2015-2018
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.

CPMC Ray Dolby Brain Health Center, San Francisco, CA 2013-2015
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.

Alzheimer's Association, San Jose, CA 2013-2015
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.

MEDIA

Columbia Spectator, "As SWC-UAW Strike Looks, Student Workers Take on Medical Debt, Allege Failing Health Care Coverage" 2026

Columbia Spectator, "Barnard-Columbia Abolition Collective Hosts Teach-In on the Prison Industrial Complex, Calls for Cops off Campus" 2023

Washington Post, "Columbia Graduate Workers End 10-Week Strike as Tentative Deal Reached" 2022

New York Times, "Why Columbia Student Workers are Back on Strike" 2021

New York Times, "Tensions Rise at Columbia as Strikers Fear Retaliation from University" 2021

Business Insider, "Columbia Grad Students are on Strike over Pay Changes and Unmet Contract Demands" 2021

Marketplace Podcast: "More and More Graduate Students Seek to Unionize" 2021

More Perfect Union: "Largest Strike in America: Columbia Student Workers Demand a Fair Contract" 2021

ACADEMIC SERVICE AND POLICY PRACTICE

Fall Meeting Planning Committee, AcademyHealth State-University Partnership Learning Network 2025

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

Judge, NAELA Foundation "Elevating Voices" Graduate-Level Competition 2025

Innovation Incubator, Society for Social Work and Research 2025

Disability Justice Working Group, Rutgers AAUP-AFT 2025 -

Session Discussant: Policies and Programs to Promote Access Among Postpartum Populations, APPAM 2024

Search Committee Member, Rutgers Center for State Health Policy	2023
Business Affairs and Licenses Committee Chair, Brooklyn Community Board 6, Office of the Brooklyn Borough President	2023 -
Session Organizer: Work and Work-Life Policies and Programs, SSWR	2023
Appointed Member of Brooklyn Community Board 6, Office of the Brooklyn Borough President	2022 -
Bargaining Committee Representative, Student Workers of Columbia-UAW Local 2710	2021-2022
Social Work Representative, Columbia University PhD Council	2021-2023
Session Organizer: Disparities in Health and Wealth, APPAM	2021
Doctoral Student Peer Mentor, Peer-to-Peer Mentoring Program, Columbia School of Social Work	2020-2023
Support Group Facilitator, Alzheimer's Association of New York City	2020 -
Founding Member, Doctoral Student Task Force, Columbia School of Social Work	2020-2021
Selected Student Representative, Doctoral Program Orientation, Columbia School of Social Work	2020
Advocacy Collective, Planned Parenthood of Greater New York	2019-2022
Political Boot Camp, Congressional Research Institute for Social Work and Policy	2019
Health Care Working Group, Student Workers of Columbia-UAW Local 2710	2018-2023
Leadership Development Institute, San Francisco Department of Veterans Affairs	2016-2017
Support Group Facilitator, Alzheimer's Association of Northern California/Northern Nevada	2015-2018

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATION MEMBERSHIPS

AcademyHealth, Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management, Society of Social Work and Research