



Source: Amanda Aykanian

CAREERS AND RESEARCH

Amanda Aykanian, Research Associate, Advocates for Human Potential

Amanda Aykanian majored in psychology at Framingham State University and found that she enjoyed the routine and organization of research. She wrote an undergrad thesis to answer the research question: How does the way in which course content is presented affect students' feelings about the content and the rate at which they retain it?

After graduating, Aykanian didn't want to go to graduate school right away; instead she wanted to explore her interests and get a sense of what she could do with research. Advocates for Human Potential (AHP) was the last research assistant (RA) job that Aykanian applied for. Her initial tasks as an RA at AHP ranged from taking notes, writing agendas, and assembling project materials to entering research data, cleaning data, and proofing reports. As she contributed more to project reports, she began to think about data from a more theoretical standpoint.

During 7 years at AHP, Aykanian has helped lead program evaluation research, design surveys and write survey questions, conduct phone and qualitative interviews, and lead focus groups. Her program evaluation research almost always uses a mixed-methods approach, so Aykanian has learned a lot about how qualitative and quantitative methods can complement each other. She has received a lot of on-the-job training in data analysis and has learned how to think about and write a proposal in response to federal funding opportunities.

Aykanian was promoted to research associate and describes her current role as part program evaluation coordinator and part data analyst. She has also returned to graduate school, earning a master's degree in applied sociology and then starting a PhD program in social welfare.