

McKINLEY SAUNDERS

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CURRENT POSITION

Research Economist, Data Analytics & Digital Solutions Group
RTI International—Research Triangle Park, NC

July 2019 - Present

EDUCATION

Bachelor of Arts in Economics
William & Mary—Williamsburg, VA

May 2019

Graduate Certificate in Geographic Information Systems
North Carolina State University—Raleigh, NC

May 2022

Master of Geospatial Information Science & Technology
North Carolina State University—Raleigh, NC

Expected December 2026

SKILLS

Programming & Software: Stata, R, Python, SQL, ESRI products (ArcGIS Pro, ArcGIS Online, ArcPy, ArcGIS Server), QGIS, GRASS GIS, Microsoft Office Suite

Quantitative Analysis: Econometrics, statistical modeling, survey data analysis, spatial analysis, pricing and market analysis, simulation methods

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Research Economist, RTI International, Data Analytics & Digital Solutions Group, July 2019- Present.

- Develops, implements, and leads interdisciplinary research at the intersection of economics, geography, and public health policy using quantitative and geospatial methods.
- Leads economic and statistical analyses for federal, state, and local clients, focusing on public health intervention evaluations, tobacco sales surveillance, substance use patterns and mortality, substance use disorder treatment and prevention services, food systems, social determinants of health, and the built environment.
- Serves as Assistant Project Director for a multi-million-dollar, five-year federal contract, overseeing client communication, business development, and a team of 10+ analysts across 15 tasks.
- Drives peer-reviewed research, presentations, and client reports, leveraging expertise in econometrics, panel and survey data analysis, spatial epidemiology, and Social Determinants of Health.
- Contributes to business development by expanding data visualization capabilities, creating static and interactive maps for client deliverables, presentations, proposals, and manuscripts.

Research Fellow, William & Mary, May 2018- May 2019.

- Conducted quantitative research as a Research Fellow at the Schroeder Center for Health Policy and the M. Foscue Brock Institute for Community and Global Health.
- Analyzed childhood health and aid distribution in transitioning low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) at the subnational levels of Nigeria.
- Defined the conceptual model, collected and cleaned data, and co-authored peer reviewed manuscript. Presented research to members in academia.

Research Assistant, William & Mary, Department of Economics, January 2018 – May 2019.

- Led quantitative data analysis on Virginia Hospital Discharges: Patient Level Data to conduct health policy and economic research.
- Integrated econometric modeling with geocoded data to enhance research capabilities using GIS and create accessible visual representations through mapping.
- Presented research topic to members of Congress as well as at the 23rd Annual Posters on the Hill sponsored by the Council on Undergraduate Research.

SELECT PUBLICATIONS

- Humphrey, J. L., Patel, S., Strack, C., Lindstrom, M., **Saunders, M.**, LaKosky, P., Kral, A., Lambdin, B. (2026). A geospatial analysis of access to syringe services programs in the United States, 2023. *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, 284(113168), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2026.113168>.
- **Saunders, M.**, Inyang, N., Nagler, C., Coats, E., Liu, S., Loomis, B. (2026). Receipt and Use of Tobacco Product Coupons Among Adults Who Use Cigarettes, Cigars, and Smokeless Tobacco: Reasons for Use and Association With Subsequent Tobacco Product Purchases. *Nicotine & Tobacco Research*, 28(7), <https://doi.org/10.1093/ntr/ntag010>.
- Gammon, D., Gaber, J., **Saunders, M.**, Zarkin, G. (2025). Estimates of first-year OTC naloxone sales in four U.S. states with high rates of opioid overdose deaths: KY, MA, NY, OH. 178(209762), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.josat.2025.209762>.
- Guillory, J., Crankshaw, E., Alam, I. Z., Curry, L., **Saunders, M.**, Malterud, A., ... & Alexander, A. (2025). Smoking Behavior and Social Identity: Correlates of Phantom Smoking Among Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Other Sexual and Gender Diverse Young Adults. *Nicotine and Tobacco Research*, 27(7), 1247-1255. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ntr/ntae252>.
- Humphrey, J., Strack, C., Patel, S., **Saunders, M.**, Wenger, L., Bluthenthal, R., ... & Lambdin, B. (2025). Implementation gaps in US syringe services programs, 2022. *JAMA Network Open*, 8(7), e2522764. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2025.22764>.
- Curry, L. E., Guillory, J., Henes, A., **Saunders, M.**, MacMonegle, A., Nonnemaker, J., ... Sanders, E. C. (2023). Factors associated with use of cigars, little cigars, cigarillos, and blunts among hip hop youth in the United States. *American Journal of Health Behavior*, 47(4), 851–869. <https://doi.org/10.5993/AJHB.47.4.20>.
- **Saunders, M.**, Humphrey, J. L., & Lambdin, B. (2023). Spatiotemporal trends in three smoothed overdose death rates in US counties, 2012-2020. *Preventing Chronic Disease*, 20, E16. <https://doi.org/10.5888/pcd20.220316>.
- Guillory, J., Curry, L., Farrelly, M., Henes, A., Homsy, G., **Saunders, M.**, ... & Ganz, O. (2022). Reach, receptivity, and beliefs associated with the Fresh Empire campaign to prevent and reduce cigarette use among youth in the United States. *American Journal of Health Promotion*, 36(5), 789-800. <https://doi.org/10.1177/089011712110699>.
- Dolan, C. B., **Saunders, M.**, & BenYishay, A. (2020). Childhood health and the changing distribution of foreign aid: Evidence from Nigeria's transition to lower-middle-income status. *PLoS One*, 15(11). <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0241866>

ACADEMIC AND VOLUNTEER SERVICE

Peer Reviewer, *Tobacco Control*, 2023

Executive Nutrition & Wellness Director, *Greater City*, 2016-2018

Gala Chair, *The Canterbury Association at William & Mary*, 2016-2018

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