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SRCD Brings Youth Mental Health Experts to Congress in First Child Policy Connect Experience

Thirteen SRCD members with expertise in youth mental health research and practice joined SRCD's Policy team for the inaugural [Child Policy Connect](#) Capitol Hill Day event.



Pictured from top to bottom and left to right: Policy Manager, Juan Romero-Casillas; Celene Domitrovich, Ph.D.; Titilayo Aluko; LaTasha Ireland, Ph.D.; Policy Manager, Becca Mudoch; Policy Director, Lindsay Turner Trammell; Henry Willis, Ph.D.; Theda Rose, Ph.D.; Policy Associate, Izzy Aaron; Lydia HaRim Ahn, Ph.D.; Charissa Cheah, Ph.D.; Morgan Crossman, Ph.D.; Policy Associate, Taylor Savage; Christi Bergin, Ph.D.; Judy Peter, Ph.D.; Maureen Black, Ph.D. Not pictured: Anna Johnson, Ph.D.; Nikia Pinson, LMSW

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From July 29-31, 2025, thirteen SRCD members with expertise in youth mental health research and practice attended the inaugural Child Policy Connect event in Washington, DC.

SRCD members from across the country met with Republicans and Democrats in 19 offices across the Senate and House to help bring evidence on child and adolescent mental health into the policy process. They also shared why social science matters and the impact of federal attacks on research grants and scientific communities.

[Child Policy Connect](#) – an initiative under SRCD’s new [Child Policy Hub](#) strategy – brings together SRCD members and Congressional offices to answer pressing policy questions that impact children and families. The Child Policy Hub launched in 2024 to train, empower, and support SRCD members in forging relationships with policymakers to improve evidence-based policymaking. SRCD’s federal [science advocacy](#) work is a key part of the Hub, promoting the importance of science research funding and issues impacting the scientific workforce.

In the Child Policy Connect meetings, researchers met with legislative staff to discuss how the child development evidence base can inform youth mental health policies on issues like rural access to mental health care, substance use, eating disorders, prosocial behavior, cuts to federal programs, and peer support programs. Legislative staff shared status updates on bills that tackled these issues, proposed ideas for informational briefings, and expressed enthusiasm in building on the burgeoning relationships with the attending researchers.

While SRCD researchers were on Capitol Hill, many also met with their state’s Senators to share why science matters, and how recent cuts to federal grants and contracts have harmed our communities. At this fraught moment for science, researchers shared their stories with some of the most influential Senators with sway over scientific funding and legislation, including Sen. Collins (R-ME), Sens. Hawley and Schmitt (R-MO), Sen. Sanders (I-VT) and more.

Researchers were recruited and fully supported by SRCD throughout their experience. After SRCD policy staff screened congressional offices for interest in mental health policy and willingness to utilize research evidence in their policymaking, SRCD policy staff identified researchers with relevant expertise within the Child Policy Connect community and the broader SRCD membership. Familiarity with federal policy was not a requirement. Instead, the SRCD policy team sought researchers who were eager to learn and make an impact in policy.

During the half-day training session, SRCD policy staff prepped attending researchers for both roles – nonpartisan sharers of research and advocates for science funding - and facilitated all meetings between policymakers and researchers. Many scholars also received travel support from SRCD to attend. All of this work was made possible with significant investments from SRCD’s Governing Council and the William T. Grant Foundation.

The Child Policy Connect Capitol Hill Day was not the end of these researchers’ relationships with policymakers, but the beginning of mutually beneficial collaborations. The morning after the full day of legislative meetings on Capitol Hill, the researchers and SRCD policy team gathered to plan their follow-up actions with legislative offices and within days, new fact sheets and policy briefs had been created to support Congress’ needs.

SRCD’s Child Policy Hub is built on a theory of change that centers policymakers’ needs. By responding in real time to the questions policymakers are asking and drawing upon a wide body of literature in answering those questions, researchers can better promote evidence-based policymaking. Child Policy Connect and Science Advocacy help scholars learn and put into practice two different ways to interact with policymakers – as an impartial, “honest broker” of evidence, and a scientific advocate.

All SRCD members are invited to be a part of this work. Join the [Child Policy Connect community](#) on SRCD’s Commons to know when policymakers are asking for your expertise.

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