



Society for Research in Child Development

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Child Policy Briefs Governance Plan

Description:

SRCD members want an organization that responds, proactively, and robustly to emerging U.S. national policy issues. Members also want to be empowered in real time with policy resources they can act upon in their personal capacity. Child Policy Briefs (CPB), the direct replacement of the Rapid Assessment and Response Strategy (RARS), will serve as a bank of resources for SRCD members, policymakers, and external organizations on national-level policy issues that impact children's development.

CPB will proactively anticipate policy areas impacting children that are likely to require fast response. We will publish short policy briefs, summarizing the evidence on the issue, on our website. Primarily, these briefs are a member-capacity building initiative, and their main use will be by SRCD members. In addition, SRCD will use them as relevant in our policy work, for example, when a relevant Presidential statement is issued, or when SRCD is writing federal comment letters. If an acute event happens, SRCD can use its databases to send relevant briefs to policymakers.

In the spirit of maintaining SRCD's reputation as honest and as a non-partisan broker of evidence on child policy issues, CPBs will provide policy considerations rather than policy recommendations.¹ In that sense, CPBs are not an advocacy tool for SRCD to promote specific legislation or policies, instead, CPBs will show the evidence and the positive and/or negative, short- and long-term effects of programs, regulations, or other types of policy. In that way, we seek to provide policymakers with an understanding of the nuance of policy decisions, based on the evidence – how do the end goals of policies impact children's development, in what ways do policies impact different groups of people, what are the alternative actions available to achieve the end goals.

Goals

For SRCD members:

1. Increase member satisfaction in SRCD's policy approach.
2. Create a resource bank that enables members to respond to emerging U.S. national policy issues that affect children's development, particularly those impacting marginalized children and families.
3. Give SRCD members a way to request SRCD action on policy issues.

¹ For more on the definition of an honest broker, see: Roger Pielke Jr.'s (2007), *Honest Broker*.

For external stakeholders (advocates, state and federal lawmakers and government officials)

4. SRCD becomes a source of nonpartisan, scientific knowledge that promotes evidence-based policymaking for children and families.
5. Increase SRCD opportunities to build relationships with external stakeholders.

Overview of Roles and Responsibilities

Here, we use the RACI model to define roles and responsibilities:

- Responsible parties oversee the creation, project management, and execution of the activity.
- Accountable parties are ultimately responsible for the end product (i.e., they are the ones members will give feedback to).
- Consulted parties need to give input or advice but do not need to lead the project or make a decision.
- Informed parties need to be told of the decision, after the fact.

The following responsibilities have been assigned by the Governing Council (GC):

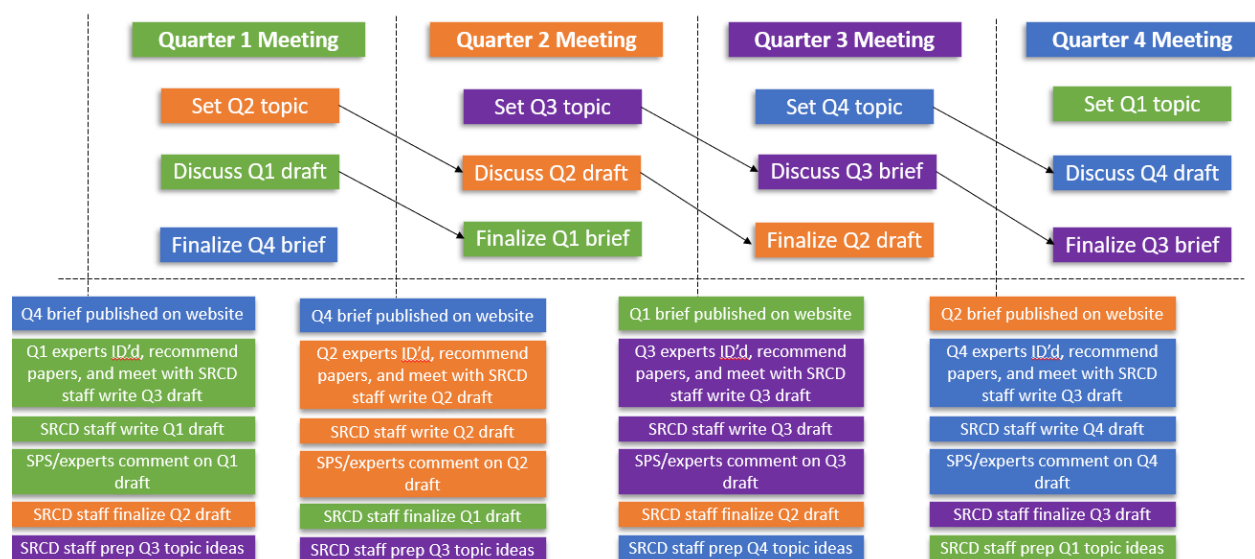
Party	RACI	Description
SRCD Policy Department	Responsible	Coordinates the administration of the program. Provides advice to SPS on the topics that could be selected, based on internal policy monitoring. Facilitates member input process, including topic requests and member satisfaction with the program. Write the briefs. Oversees coordination with expert peer reviewers. Disseminates briefs when acute events happen. Informs the Comms department and ED when a new brief is uploaded.
The Policy Committee (PC) will oversee CPB, with implementation delegated to the Social Policy Subcommittee (SPS)	Accountable	Decides on brief topics, with SRCD Policy Department advice and SRCD member input. Communicates with SRCD members who submit briefs. Defines the strategic angle of each brief. Helps identify expert scholars to contribute. Peer reviews the outputs of the briefs. Reviews final briefs.
Expert reviewers	Consulted	Recruited to consult on individual briefs, ad hoc to SPS. Reviewers must be SRCD members and have specific expertise in the brief topic. They will: help SRCD policy staff identify 3-5 key pieces of research to base the brief on, meet with SRCD policy staff to discuss the evidence-base. Review and comment on drafts of the brief. Provide

		insights to SPS if requested. This time commitment will be spread over a quarter (3 months) and reviewers can be listed as a contributor on SRCD's website.
SRCD members	Consulted	May submit policy topic proposals for SPS consideration via an online form.
SRCD Communications Department and Executive Director	Informed	Sent briefs, after they are finalized. The Communications Department uploads to the SRCD website, includes them in SRCD e-newsletters, and may support dissemination as appropriate.

Implementation and Governance

The Social Policy Subcommittee (SPS) will meet quarterly with the SRCD Policy Department to run CPB. SRCD Policy Staff will send to the SPS the list of proposals, with a summary of the Department's opinion on whether the proposals meet the Decision Framework Criteria. We expect one briefing to be published per quarter (four yearly). Once fully implemented, SPS will take the following actions in each quarterly meeting: 1) set a topic for the following quarter, 2) discuss a draft of a previously selected topic, and 3) finalize a previous brief. See graphic below for more detail, including activities that happen between meetings (bottom half).

Sample CPB workflow, once fully operationalized:



Note: colors in the above graphic correspond to four different potential brief topics, which are in different stages of development concurrently

Submission Requirements:

SRCD members will have a chance to submit requests via an [online form](#), accessible by logging into their membership account. Submitters will be asked to provide the following information:

- Describe the policy issue you would like SRCD to address and provide links to relevant resources (e.g., recent new coverage, pending legislation).
- Describe why you think SRCD should engage on the policy issue and why it meets the first two conditions of the Decision Framework Criteria (see appendix 1).
 - These conditions are:
 - Priority
 - Influence, Benefit & Impact
- Provide a list of researchers or areas of literature that would serve as an evidence base for the response.
- Include how quickly should SRCD write a topic on this issue.

Criteria for CPB Topics

CPBs must meet the Decision Framework Criteria (see appendix 1), which is an operational checklist that builds upon the “Principles for Social Policy Engagement” (see appendix 2). The Decision Framework Criteria was adopted by GC in 2024, following a significant period of member engagement and strategic planning. While the Principles for Social Policy Engagement are a valuable framework, in operation, they were difficult to apply. The criteria aim to be a checklist to better help operationalize the concepts in the principles. SRCD’s Policy Department will provide guidance on each policy area’s fit against the criteria, ahead of each meeting.

Broadly speaking, the following must be met for SRCD to select a brief’s topic:

1. Is this a strategic priority? The issue must meet at least two of these requirements to proceed:
 - a. Does the policy affect science and the success of our scientific community?
 - b. Does the issue meet one of SRCD’s current four policy priorities (science funding, scientific workforce diversity, equity, and inclusion, early childhood education, youth mental health)?
 - c. Does the issue directly relate to our mission to advance the developmental sciences and promote the use of developmental research to improve human lives?
2. Policy discourse fails to draw appropriately upon scientific evidence (Policy Discourse Principle)

3. The scientific evidence is weighty and clear on the policy issue (Preponderance of Evidence Principle)
4. Engagement is determined to be a strategic investment of SRCD's resources to support its mission (Strategic Investment Principle)

Voting Process

Via a voting process, SPC will accept/reject proposals.

- Before the meeting, the Policy Department will circulate a list of submitted proposals to SPS. It would include:
 - Analysis for proposals against the "Decision Framework Criteria" (see appendix 1.0)
 - Rotation list of previously accepted topics
- First, SPS votes on new submissions to consider if any topics should be rejected (i.e. do not align with the Decision Framework Criteria or are not appropriate for this mechanism). All rejected submissions will be taken out of the rotation. The SPS Chair will communicate the decision with the submitter.
- Secondly, on the accepted proposals, there will be another vote to set a CPB for the quarter.
 - Proposals that are not adopted for the following quarter will become part of the "rotation list".
 - Topics on the rotation list, along with new proposals, will be considered for the following quarterly meeting, alongside other new issues.
- Voting processes will be considered confidential to the committee (i.e. individual votes will not be shared with the wider membership).
- Both voting processes will use a simple majority voting structure.

Determining the Strategic Angle of a Brief

After a CPB topic is set, SPS creates and defines the strategic angle of the brief, oversees the implementation process for CPBs, and signs off on the brief's findings and policy considerations. It should consider the following questions:

- How can SRCD and developmental science provide unique insights on this topic?
- What questions should the brief respond to?
- With what audience do we expect SRCD members to be sharing the brief? E.g. state lawmakers, federal lawmakers, agency staff, advocates etc. What are the implications of how this audience thinks about the topic area, and what should we consider as we write to that audience?
- Where is there alignment and disagreement in the literature and among SRCD members on this issue?

- How established is literature, and therefore will we be making policy considerations to policymakers in this brief? What are the anticipated policy considerations?

Past Briefings: Updates

Combining Statements of Evidence, Social Policy Reports, Social Policy Briefs, and Child Evidence Brief, SRCD has published around 50 written materials, some going back between 10-15 years. As the literature evolves, revisions should be made to ensure that SRCD's past work continues to answer our societal dilemmas to what corresponds to children's development.

SRCD's Policy Department will provide the SPS a list of SRCD's published briefings, counting backwards five years (2019), and ask the subcommittee if they should be updated.

Updating a briefing will be considered as a "new proposal" to be considered as a CPB. Therefore, it will follow the governance and voting process established above.

Quality Assurance

To ensure briefs align with the scientific literature, our "quality assurance" process relies upon topic-area expert SRCD members and all SPS committee members. This group is tasked with ensuring the final briefs meet the following before they are published:

- Represent the best available scientific literature.
- Are generally aligned with SRCD member views and expectations, within reason.
- Are short, clearly written, avoid jargon, avoid politically charged language, and audience appropriate.
- Are nonpartisan.
- Consider diversity, equity, and inclusion in their framing and discussion, wherever possible.
- Meet the strategic goals discussed by the committee, when the proposal was selected, including offering a unique SRCD or developmental science perspective on the issue, and address issues impacting children and families, specifically; and
- Help build members' capacity to engage on policy issues.
- Ensures that the brief is providing policy considerations and not recommending, advocating nor lobbying for a specific policy action.

Finding Expert Reviewers

To determine the expert reviewers (non SPS member) that will help evaluate the CPB:

- SPS will decide on a list of 2-5 non SPS members to be considered as the expert reviewer. SPS would decide the order of preference.
- The SRCD Policy Department will reach out to the preferred expert to confirm availability.

Policy Considerations

Core to our ability to inform social policy is our reputation as honest, non-partisan brokers of evidence on child policy issues. Therefore, CPBs are not a tool for advocacy nor lobbying, but instead a report that's based on science that provides readers with policy considerations to make informed choices. This needs to be central to our branding and presentation to policymakers, lest we be written off as an agenda-seeking body. Thus, CPBs will not recommend specific pieces of legislation or endorse particular programs. Instead, CPBs would provide information on why the program is important, with evidence that shows how children's lives are improved, or not, by that type of policy.

For example, and for illustrative purposes only, if the CPB is about child nutrition, we might conceive of a recommendation vs. a consideration in the following ways:

- **Policy recommendation:** Congress should expand the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program as part of the 2024 Farm Bill reauthorization.
- **Policy consideration:** Making eligibility rules more generous for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program significantly improves low-income children's nutrition, a crucial component of healthy development.

The first is an endorsement of a specific legislative action and could be seen as taking a particular stance on a program. Additionally, it does not capture how the evidence supports or defines expansion (i.e. more funding, eligibility, access, etc.) The second shows how the action is tied to the evidence base and enables the policymaker to understand which actions could lead to impact for what children.

Being non-partisan does not mean we disengage with difficult questions or avoid speaking out on policies that will support or harm children, families, or our members. We must be fierce defenders of science. But often, social policy moves faster than evidence and we may not have the perfect study to respond with immediately. What we can do, however, is help policymakers and influencers inform their decisions based on the best theory and application available. Our deep knowledge of how systems, contexts, and programs work can provide policymakers with the challenge, nuance and support they need when trying to answer new questions.

We can do this most effectively when working directly with policymakers and influencers, often behind-the-scenes, through building trusted relationships. This means we are not always aiming our social policy work at a public audience, and we are not lobbyists who propose bill language or file lawsuits. Instead, we understand and work with the complexities of the policymaking process to help advance policies that will support children, families, and our members.

Appendix 1: Decision Framework Criteria

SRCD should use the following checklist to guide its decisions on when to engage in policy. This is not expected to be exhaustive, and judgment should be applied based on the criteria. Additionally, policy can change rapidly, so the criteria may need to be reviewed multiple times, if contexts change.

1. Priority

- a. Must meet at least two of these requirements to proceed:
 - i. Does the policy affect science and the success of our scientific community?
 - ii. Does the issue meet SRCD's current four policy priorities (science funding, scientific workforce diversity, equity, and inclusion, early childhood education, youth mental health)?
 - iii. Does the issue directly relate to our mission to advance the developmental sciences and promote the use of developmental research to improve human lives?

2. Influence, Benefit and Impact

- a. Do we have a unique contribution to the issue that might impact the debate? (i.e., do our members generate evidence that can offer unique insights on the issue?)
- b. What is the extent of our ability to influence change compared to other organizations?
- c. Who benefits from the activity and who may be negatively affected by the statement?
- d. Does the activity benefit the child development discipline broadly and advance the knowledge and activities of the scientific enterprise?
- e. What is the scale of impact to children's development or to science?

3. History of this topic

- a. Is the decision consistent with SRCD decisions in the more recent past (<5 years)?

4. Geography

- a. Is the proposal a response to a U.S.-based issue (Federal, State, Territories) or outside the U.S.?
- b. If the issue is from outside the U.S. or on a U.S. territory, what are the cultural, intercultural and/or historical contexts that needs to be considered?
- c. What might be the local and international political consequences of issuing a statement for an issue that happened outside the U.S.?

5. Risk

- a. Can we ensure the output will be accurate and evidence-based?
- b. Is there a reputational risk to the organization by engaging? (i.e., to our nonpartisan stance)
- c. Is there a legal risk (i.e., jeopardize grants, 501c3 status, etc.)?
- d. Does this activity affect SRCD's credibility?

- i. How? *Take into consideration who might oppose, and the nature of their opposition.

6. Alignment

- a. How does the issue align with SRCD?
- b. Is there conflicting/agreement in the field? If there's a conflict, please address those issues for the Policy Committee's consideration.

Appendix 2: Principles for Social Policy Engagement

SRCD engages in policy to:

1. Improve the Development, Health, Safety, and Well-being of Children, especially those from Historically Marginalized or Vulnerable Populations (Beneficence Principle)
 - a. SRCD recognizes the importance of engaging in policy discourse to improve the development and the health, safety, and well-being of children, particularly those from historically marginalized or vulnerable populations, including, but not limited to, those who are low-income, LGBTQ+, Black, Indigenous, and/or People of Color.
2. Increase the Application of Developmental Science in Child and Family Policymaking (Influence Principle)
 - a. SRCD recognizes that policymaking will better serve children when developmental science informs policymaking decisions. Drawing upon SRCD's unique scientific expertise on child development, SRCD will engage in activities that communicate policy-relevant scientific evidence to policymakers and other key policy stakeholders to inform evidence-based child and family policymaking.² Policy-relevant scientific evidence includes descriptive and inferential data that delineates the scope of a specific societal issue; the conditions that contribute to the societal issue and their consequences for children's development; and how policies, programs, or interventions influence these conditions and their associated consequences. Policy-relevant evidence should also indicate potential implications of policymaking actions when this type of evidence is available. This includes highlighting what actions might be effective and how those actions may be implemented to create favorable conditions that support children's development and their health, safety, and well-being.

Under What Conditions Should SRCD Engage in Policy Discourse?

1. Policy Discourse Fails to Draw Appropriately Upon Scientific Evidence (Policy Discourse Principle)
 - a. SRCD engages on a policy issue that affects children when policymaking activities (a) misrepresent the conclusions that may be drawn from developmental science, and/or (b) do not take into account relevant developmental science findings.
2. The Scientific Evidence is Weighty and Clear on the Policy Issue (Preponderance of Evidence Principle)
 - a. SRCD engages on a policy issue when there is a preponderance of policy-relevant scientific evidence to support an actionable, evidence-informed response. The evidence must show clear and consistent trends in findings, and there must be general consensus on the interpretation of the literature and its implications for policy actions.
3. Engagement is Determined to be a Strategic Investment of SRCD's Resources to Support Its Mission (Strategic Investment Principle)
 - a. SRCD will weigh the potential influence of SRCD's engagement on evidence-based policymaking, the potential resource investment (including personnel, infrastructure, supplies) to support the production of the policy engagement product or activity, and the implications of the investment on SRCD's other programs, initiatives, and activities. SRCD engages on a policy issue when it is determined to be a strategic investment of SRCD's resources to support its mission. This decision will be directly informed by the following support principles:
 - i. Engagement Supports SRCD's Visibility as a Trusted, Valued, and Reliable Source of Scientific Expertise on Child Development and its Application to Policy
 1. SRCD must build and maintain (1) its reputation as a trusted, valued, and reliable nonpartisan resource of scientific expertise on child development and its application in evidence-based policymaking, and (2) its positive relationships with key policymakers who span diverse perspectives and serve in significant roles of influence. Any policy engagement product or activity created, supported, or endorsed by SRCD will represent a scientific perspective on the policy issue; accurately reflect the extant literature on the subject and draw appropriate policy-relevant implications; utilize communication formats that are

accessible, timely, and actionable for policymakers; and avoid language or communication styles that may appear partisan.

ii. Engagement is a Strategic Application of the Expertise of SRCD Staff and Members

1. SRCD will draw upon the relevant scientific and professional expertise of its members and staff to produce the scientific content of a policy engagement product or activity and utilize appropriate communication format(s) and targeted dissemination strategies to maximize the likelihood of evidence-based policymaking on the issue. To do so, SRCD members who have relevant scientific expertise will serve as experts⁶ (e.g., authors, speakers) who produce the content of the evidence-informed response or serve as reviewers. SRCD staff will assess and advise on the most appropriate and effective policy engagement approach (e.g., type of product/activity and corresponding dissemination strategy) and the resources needed for the approach and support the implementation of said approach.

iii. Engagement Has Clear Potential to Influence the Understanding, Discourse, or Direction of Policy Action.

1. SRCD will strategically engage on a policy issue when there is clear potential to influence policymakers':
 - a. understanding of the issue, including the conditions contributing to the policy issue and their influence on child development, and how policy actions can influence these conditions and their consequences;
 - b. evidence-informed discourse about the issue with other policymakers and key stakeholders; or
 - c. policy action to support evidence-based child and family policymaking, such as the development of legislation, executive regulations, or other executive actions.

iv. Engagement will Not Adversely Impact SRCD's Existing Programs, Initiatives, or Activities.

1. SRCD will weigh the impact of resource investment for policy engagement (including SRCD personnel, infrastructure, and supplies) on its programs, initiatives, activities, and implications for commitments to other stakeholders particularly those in the

policy area. SRCD may choose not to engage on the issue if engagement would divert extensive financial or staff resources from existing programs, initiatives, or activities or by other means adversely impact SRCD's ongoing work. Loping and interpreting evidence and should be interpreted by experts with sufficient knowledge of those approaches;

- a. Second, developmental science on children and families from vulnerable and marginalized populations is younger than other areas of scholarship. At the same time, these are the populations that have a strong likelihood of being disproportionately impacted by future policy dilemmas.; and
- b. Third, structural bias embedded in the production and peer review process impacts the size and scope of research on vulnerable and marginalized populations (LaSala et al., 2008; Roberts et al., 2020; Syed, Santos, Yoo, & Juang, 2018). For an example of assessing evidence in child developmental sciences, see [Appendix A in: National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. \(2019\). The promise of adolescence: Realizing opportunity for all youth. National Academies Press.](#)