

SRCD Pre-doctoral State Policy Fellowship: Call for Letters of Intent

**Call for Letters of Intent:
Pre-doctoral State Policy Fellowship sponsored by the
Society for Research in Child Development
in collaboration with the
University-Based Child and Family Policy Consortium**

The Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD) is seeking letters of intent for the SRCD Pre-doctoral State Policy Fellowship for 2019-2020 academic year. Pre-doctoral students participating in the program will have a part-time placement in a state executive branch agency for a firsthand experience in state policymaking, program implementation, and program evaluation. A letter of intent may be submitted by university-based professors and researchers interested in serving as the academic mentor for an SRCD Pre-doctoral State Policy Fellow or submitted jointly by a pre-doctoral student and an academic mentor.

SRCD Pre-doctoral State Policy Fellows will be placed in state executive branch agencies that oversee state pre-kindergarten programs for a firsthand experience in state policymaking, program implementation, and program evaluation. Pre-doctoral fellows should have a background in early learning and development. The specific project within the agency does not need to be developed ahead of time.

The SRCD Pre-doctoral State Policy Fellowship is for candidates who:

- Have completed at least 2 years of coursework and are in good academic standing;
- Have a background in early learning and education;
- Can commit to a 12-month part-time placement in a state executive branch office that averages 20 hours per week over the course of a year - fellowships are immersive experiences and fellows will be expected to be on site at the state agency for most if not all of their work
- Are interested in an immersion experience working in a state executive branch agency office focusing on the implementation of a state funded pre-kindergarten program;
- Are U.S. citizens, and;
- Are members of SRCD.

SRCD is offering this pre-doctoral state fellowship so that graduate students will build skills in policy research and program implementation and state executive branch offices will benefit from the expertise of a child development researcher. In addition, academic mentors may benefit from a greater understanding of the research, policy, and program issues salient to the office. Academic mentors are not asked to design a project with the fellow in advance, but to support the fellow as the immersion experience proceeds.

SRCD Pre-doctoral State Policy Fellows will be provided with a \$30,000 stipend provided directly to the pre-doctoral student. Up to \$15,000 to defray the costs of tuition and health insurance will be provided to the fellow or university as appropriate. Academic mentors will receive an honorarium of \$5,000, provided directly to the mentor. Funding will also be available for the academic mentor, state placement supervisor, and fellow to attend a national conference focusing on early childhood development.

The SRCD fellowship team in Washington D.C. will be available as a resource to support the fellows throughout the year. Early in their fellowship year, state policy fellows will attend a day of individualized state-specific training organized by SRCD. Additional training will be held in October at the SRCD office in Washington D.C. to orient the fellow to child and family policy at the federal level. Fellows will participate remotely in monthly seminars focusing on child and family policy issues. Fellows will also be asked to complete a brief log of their activities at the placement and to participate in a monthly check-in call with a senior member of the fellowship team at SRCD.

Additionally, they will be asked to develop a professional development plan articulating goals for the fellowship year, with guidance and input from the academic mentor and state placement supervisor.

At the end of the year, again with the guidance and input of the state placement supervisor and academic mentor, fellows will be asked to develop a portfolio illustrating contributions they have made at their placements (with input from the placement supervisor on whether and to what extent documents are confidential or can be shared beyond review by SRCD). All SRCD State Policy Fellows will travel to Washington, D.C. for a Capstone Meeting to provide brief presentations on their portfolios (as appropriate given confidentiality) and to reflect on the experience of the fellowship year. Academic mentors and state placement supervisors will be asked to participate with the fellow in a kick-off call to start the fellowship year, to have a mid-year touch base call with a senior member of the SRCD fellowship team, and an end-of-year interview to provide SRCD with feedback and input on the fellowship from their perspectives.

Staff in state executive branch agencies with interest in providing a placement are encouraged to reach out to research colleagues at universities to share information about this program and encourage them to consider submitting letters of intent as noted below. State agency staff can contact policyfellowships@srcd.org for assistance in identifying universities in their states to reach out to.

Application Procedure and Requirements

Letter of Intent: Due by December 21, 2018

A brief letter of intent of not more than three single-spaced pages is required as a first step. A letter of intent may be submitted jointly by a graduate student and an interested professor or university-based researcher, or may be submitted by a professor or university-based researcher interested in serving as the academic mentor for an SRCD Pre-doctoral State Policy Fellow. If submitted by an interested professor or university-based researcher alone, a specific pre-doctoral candidate does not need yet to be identified in the letter of intent.

The letter of intent must include:

Section on policy research interests:

- ❑ A description of the ongoing or planned policy-relevant research of the professor or researcher in a university-based center.

Section on current/planned working relationship with state executive branch office:

- ❑ A description of an ongoing working relationship with a state executive branch office, plans for development of such a working relationship, or previous policy-relevant research that would provide background for serving as an academic mentor to an SRCD Pre-doctoral State Policy Fellow.
- ❑ Confirmation that, should a full application be invited, it will be possible to obtain a letter of commitment from a state executive branch office focusing on state pre-kindergarten, indicating that a placement with the agency will be feasible.
- ❑ A description of the types of work potentially available for the SRCD Pre-doctoral State Policy Fellow in the state executive branch agency focusing on pre-kindergarten, with the understanding that specific projects and responsibilities for the start of the fellowship year will be determined together with the agency when the fellowship begins, and further, with the understanding that projects will evolve during the course of the fellowship year.

Section on selecting and providing input and mentoring for the SRCD Pre-doctoral State Policy Fellow:

- A description of the background of the pre-doctoral candidate, if identified, or a description of the process by which the professor will identify a specific candidate. Candidates will need to be enrolled in a doctoral-level degree program with a focus on child development research, to have completed at least 2 years of coursework, be in good academic standing, demonstrate exceptional competence in child development research, and have an interest in early learning and policy research. The letter of intent should indicate how the fellowship would align with and contribute to, rather than derail progress towards, the doctorate for the graduate student identified or the graduate students who would be considered for the fellowship.
- A description of the professional support the professor or university-based researcher would provide to the SRCD Pre-doctoral State Policy Fellow throughout the year, including plans for frequency of meetings, and whether these would be one-on-one or part of ongoing meetings with a group of graduate students or a research team. Academic mentors will be expected to support the fellow's placement experience through providing guidance and sharing resources relevant to placement projects (within guidelines set by the agency regarding confidentiality and disclosure about projects the fellow is assisting with). Support might include, for example, directing the fellow to research literature relevant to a project; serving as a sounding board in the formulation of a research question, evaluation plan, or plan for monitoring aspects of program implementation; or addressing issues with data analyses.

Letters of intent should be sent via email to policyfellowships@srcd.org with the subject line "2019-2020 SRCD Pre-doctoral State Policy Fellowship Letter of Intent."

A selection committee will review the letters of intent and invite strong applicants to submit a full application. Instructions on how to access the application website will be provided at that time.

Full applications if requested by SRCD: Due by February 15, 2019

If invited by SRCD, full applications will require:

Application materials from the pre-doctoral candidate for the fellowship:

The pre-doctoral candidate will be asked to enter background information on the application website and will then be asked to upload the following materials:

- *Current C.V.* and,
- *Statement of Interest* of no more than 1,000 words addressing professional background and qualifications for the program (including background in the research on early education), basis for interest in the program (including policy areas or issues of interest and skills to be acquired), and career goals (including how the program would support those goals). The candidate should indicate how participation in the fellowship program would be coordinated with other work towards completion of the doctorate, including progress on the dissertation.

Two letters of reference for the pre-doctoral candidate:

The pre-doctoral candidate will be asked to enter email addresses for two individuals providing letters of reference. One of the individuals should be the academic mentor of the candidate. A message will be sent automatically by the application website to each individual, including a link for uploading the letter of reference.

Application materials from the academic mentor:

The pre-doctoral candidate will be asked to provide the email address for the academic mentor. An email will then be sent automatically to the academic mentor, providing a link for uploading as a single pdf document:

- *Current C.V.* and,
- *Statement of Interest* of no more than 750 words addressing the ways in which the mentor will support the pre-doctoral student and how mentoring an SRCD Pre-doctoral State Policy Fellow will add to or extend ongoing work. The academic mentor can include sections from the letter of intent, extending the initial letter as appropriate.

If the academic mentor is not the graduate student's program advisor, instructions will also be provided for requesting a brief letter from the program chair indicating that the graduate student's participation in the program will be in keeping with requirements and progress towards the doctorate.

Letters from staff at state executive branch agency:

The pre-doctoral candidate will be asked to provide the email address (or email addresses) for staff members from the state executive branch agency focusing on the state pre- kindergarten program. A message will then be sent automatically to the staff member(s), providing a link for uploading:

- *Statement of Interest* of no more than 500 words from a state executive branch agency employee in a leadership position with the state pre-kindergarten program who would supervise the SRCD Pre-doctoral State Policy Fellow in the agency, providing a description of professional background, a description of possible projects the fellow might undertake, and confirmation of interest and time for providing supervision to the fellow. Plans for supervision should include not only provision of guidance and feedback on specific placement projects, but also opportunities for the fellow to learn about policy development and implementation in a state agency through participation (where appropriate) in meetings at the agency, and through regularly scheduled discussions with the placement supervisor during which the fellow can ask questions and reflect on what he or she is learning.
- *Letter of Commitment* from a representative of the state executive branch agency with appropriate authority confirming that the agency welcomes the possibility to host an SRCD Pre-doctoral State Policy Fellow with background in child development research; that such a placement would be in keeping with agency rules and regulations and state laws; naming the specific agency supervisor; and confirming that an appropriate workspace would be made available, including use of a computer and telephone (following agency guidelines for such use). An alternative approach to placement location would be considered if it is made clear how an immersion experience would be achieved. The statement of interest noted above and letter of commitment may be from the same individual, if appropriate.