

# Overview: SRCD Post-doctoral State Policy Fellowship Program

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**Program Overview:**  
**SRCD Post-doctoral State Policy Fellowship sponsored by**  
**the Society for Research in Child Development**  
**in collaboration with**  
**the University-Based Child and Family Policy Consortium**

## **Background: SRCD Post-doctoral Federal Policy Fellowship Program**

In 1978, the Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD) initiated the SRCD Federal Policy Fellowship Program. The fellowship provides an immersion experience in policy through placements either in U.S. Congress or Executive Branch agencies for developmental scientists with doctoral degrees in order to learn about policy development, implementation, and evaluation, and to bring their research expertise and knowledge about children, youth, and families to federal policymaking and policy implementation.

The fellowship experience provides a unique opportunity for developmental scientists to learn in greater depth about what research questions are important and salient to policymakers, how to use research to design and strengthen programs and policies for children and families, and how to achieve effective communication between researchers and policymakers. Interviews with fellowship alumni indicate that SRCD Federal Policy Fellowships are “seminal” and “transformative” experiences.

Alumni go on to pursue careers that bridge research and policy, taking on increasingly senior positions within academe, government, research organizations, foundations, and in applied work. Alumni describe designing research projects to inform public policy, teaching and mentoring students in ways that link research and policy, and applying communication skills that they developed as fellows to convey research findings more effectively in order to inform policy development and program implementation. Alumni report continuing to communicate with policymakers regarding child and family policy and having their research expertise called upon with requests to serve in an advisory capacity for those implementing and evaluating policies and programs.

## **SRCD Post-doctoral State Policy Fellowship Program**

In 2017-2018, with funding from the Heising-Simons Foundation, SRCD piloted a new Post-doctoral State Policy Fellowship Program. SRCD’s Science and Social Policy Committee worked closely in the planning and implementation of this new opportunity with the leadership of the University-Based Child and Family Policy Consortium as part of a newly formalized collaborative relationship between SRCD and the Consortium, a group of about 25 university-based programs focusing on child and family policy research.

In the 2019-2020 academic year (from September 1, 2019 through August 31, 2020), with further funding from the Heising-Simons Foundation, SRCD will be continuing the SRCD Post-doctoral State Policy Fellowship Program. SRCD will be awarding up to two full-time SRCD Post-doctoral State Policy Fellowships with placements in state executive branch offices that work on state early childhood policies. 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. Candidates with expertise in family engagement, early math skills, or the development of dual language learners in early childhood will be prioritized, but placement activities may focus on early childhood policy more broadly. Fellows will not be asked to design a project in advance. Candidates should have completed a doctorate within the past two years, must be a U.S. citizen, and must be a member of SRCD.

The goals of this post-doctoral fellowship are to provide developmental scientists with firsthand experience in state policymaking, program implementation, and program evaluation, while also providing state early childhood executive branch agencies with greater access to research and child development expertise. Fellows can be involved in bridging research and policy through a variety of responsibilities depending on the specific placement. This may involve, for example, helping to inform the design of a new program; working to strengthen implementation of an existing program; or assisting in the design, conduct or analysis of a program evaluation.

In addition to a placement supervisor within the state executive branch agency, the intent is for SRCD Post-doctoral State Policy Fellows to be supported and guided by an academic mentor (either a professor or a senior researcher from a university center or research organization) who has a background or interest in policy-related research. SRCD expects the SRCD Post-doctoral State Policy Fellowship to provide both the fellow and academic mentor opportunities to gain further experience and insights into policy development, implementation, and evaluation at the state level, and the ways in which research can be used to inform state policy.

The placement supervisor should be prepared to utilize the background of the fellow in developmental science in the work of the state agency related to early childhood programs and policies. In addition, they should be prepared to support the fellow in developing a greater understanding of state policy development, implementation and evaluation through encouraging participation in appropriate meetings and providing opportunities for discussion of questions and reflections. While there should be an idea of projects appropriate for the fellow to assist with initially, it is expected that projects will evolve, and new projects and opportunities will emerge during the course of the year. The academic mentor should be prepared to meet on a regular basis with the fellow to provide support, assisting the fellow with issues such as access to relevant research literature and providing a context to discuss how to best formulate a research question or analysis plan. At the start of the fellowship year, the fellow, placement supervisor and academic mentor (fellowship “triad”) will be asked to hold a phone meeting with SRCD staff to go over guidelines on disclosure and confidentiality regarding the work of the state agency, to confirm mutual understanding of roles and expectations, and to touch base about the extent to which the fellowship “triad” would like to schedule periodic communication to complement and extend the regular dyadic communication of the fellow with placement supervisor and fellow with academic mentor.

SRCD will be a resource for SRCD Post-doctoral State Policy Fellows throughout the year. SRCD will provide an initial state-specific training as well as training on federal policy development and implementation. SRCD will also host monthly seminars held remotely via videoconference and ask fellows to complete brief weekly or monthly logs. In addition, SRCD Post-doctoral

State Policy Fellows will be asked to work with both the academic mentor and state placement supervisor to develop a professional development plan identifying goals for the fellowship year.

At the end of the year, fellows will be required to complete a portfolio that includes 3-5 selected documents illustrating their different contributions at the placement, with an introductory overview providing context for these contributions and reflecting on how the experience of the fellowship has provided an opportunity to learn about the linkages between research and policy. State placement supervisors will be asked to work with the fellow on selection of the portfolio entries and to indicate the level of confidentiality for each document (whether and how broadly it can be shared). Both the academic mentor and state placement supervisor will be asked to support the fellow in development of the portfolio.

Fellows will be asked to participate in a Capstone Meeting with all of the SRCD State Policy Fellows to present briefly on their portfolios (as appropriate given confidentiality requests by state placement supervisors) and their reflections on the fellowship experience. SRCD Federal Policy Fellows will be invited to participate in the Capstone Meeting as well.

SRCD will be seeking ongoing communication with the fellow, the state placement supervisor, and the academic mentor, with an initial kick-off call with this “triad” of participants, monthly calls with the fellows, and mid-year and end-of-year calls with the placement supervisor and academic mentor. The final call that will be conducted at the end of the fellowship year will involve separate end-of-year interviews with each member of the triad requesting input on the SRCD State Policy Fellowship.

Fellows will receive a stipend aligned with federal GS levels (GS Grade 12, Step 1), an allocation to purchase health insurance, and funding for professional development expenses (such as travel to research meetings). Academic mentors will receive an honorarium of \$5,000 for the year in appreciation for their mentoring of the fellow and input provided to SRCD.

#### **Application Process: Letter of Intent Followed by Invitation to Submit Application**

The first step in the application process for the SRCD Post-doctoral State Policy Fellowship will be a letter of intent submitted jointly by the potential candidate and academic mentor. Letters of intent are due by December 21, 2018. The joint letter of intent submitted by the candidate and academic mentor should not exceed three pages. Letters of intent should be submitted by email to [policyfellowships@srcd.org](mailto:policyfellowships@srcd.org). A selection committee will invite full applications from a subset of those who have submitted letters of intent, which will then be due February 15, 2019. Further details about this program, including application guidelines, are available [here](#).

***State executive branch agency staff focusing on early childhood issues are encouraged to reach out to research colleagues about this opportunity for collaborative placement and mentoring of a post-doctoral fellow. Please contact [policyfellowships@srcd.org](mailto:policyfellowships@srcd.org) if assistance is needed in identifying university departments and research organizations in the state.***