



Society for Research in Child Development

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SRCD State Policy Post-doctoral Fellowship: Program Overview

*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 State Policy Post-doctoral Fellowship for the 2020-2021 academic year. A letter of intent should be submitted jointly by a prospective candidate for a post-doctoral fellowship focusing on state early childhood policy and from either a professor or a senior researcher (from a university center or research organization) with experience and/or background in policy research who is interested in serving as the academic mentor for a post-doctoral fellow.

SRCD State Policy Post-doctoral Fellows will be placed in a state executive branch early childhood agency for a firsthand experience in state policymaking, program implementation, and program evaluation. For this fellowship program, applications are especially sought from developmental scientists with backgrounds in the development of early mathematics skills, of young dual language learners, or in family engagement in the early years. However, the state agency placement may focus on any topic related to early childhood policy. The specific early childhood focus and project within the agency do not need to be developed ahead of time.

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

- Will have completed their doctoral work in any discipline relevant to child development within the past two years;
- Have expertise in early childhood development and especially in the areas of early mathematics, dual language learners, or family engagement;
- Seek a 12-month post-doctoral fellowship that is a full-time immersion in a state executive branch agency that focuses on early childhood;
- Would be available to start the fellowship full-time on September 1, 2020;
- Are U.S. citizens; and
- Are members of SRCD.

Benefits of the Fellowship

Goals: The aims of the postdoctoral state fellowship program are to provide opportunities for (a) child development scientists to build skills in conducting policy research and program implementation, and (b) state executive branch offices to benefit from the expertise of a child development researcher. In addition, academic mentors may benefit from closer ties with a state executive branch agency and gain greater understanding of the research and policymaking issues of highest priority to the agency 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.

Funding: Fellows will be provided with a stipend aligned with federal GS levels (GS Grade 12, Step 1) associated with their locality of residence and an allocation to purchase health insurance. This funding will go directly to the fellow. Fellows will also be reimbursed for up

to \$2,800 in approved professional development expenses. Academic mentors will receive an honorarium of \$5,000 for the fellowship year.

Professional Development Training: SRCD staff 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 and discussions of their placement experiences.

Roles of the State Supervisor and Academic Mentor

The intent is for each SRCD State Policy Postdoctoral Fellow to be supported and guided by both a state supervisor within the state executive branch agency, as well as an academic mentor. SRCD expects the Fellowship Program to provide both the fellow and academic mentor opportunities to gain further experience and insights into the ways in which research and child development expertise can be used to inform policymaking in state executive branch agencies.

State supervisors should be prepared to utilize the developmental science background of the fellow in the work of the agency related to the state's pre-kindergarten program. 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 assist 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.

Expectations of the Fellowship

Fellows will be expected to:

- Adhere to the time commitment to the fellowship placement office
- Participate in the training, described above
- Complete a brief log of their activities at the placement and participate in a monthly check-in call with a senior member of the fellowship team at SRCD
- Develop a professional development plan articulating goals for the fellowship year, with guidance and input from the academic mentor and state supervisor
- Develop a Portfolio illustrating contributions they have made at their placements. Portfolios will include 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.
- Attend a SRCD Policy Fellowship Capstone Meeting in Washington, D.C. with other fellows, where they will provide brief presentations on their Portfolios and to reflect on the experience of the fellowship year.

Academic mentors and state supervisors:

- Participate with the fellow in a kick-off call to start the fellowship year
- Dedicate time to mentor/supervise the fellow throughout the fellowship experience
- Complete an end-of-year report to provide SRCD with feedback
- Provide input on the fellow's Portfolio

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

Overview: Applying to the SRCD State Policy Fellowship is a two-step process.

1. Submit a letter of intent (max 3 single-spaced pages) to an online portal available on the SRCD website. Letters of intent are due by **January 3, 2020, 11:59PM Eastern**. A letter of intent should be jointly submitted by the fellowship candidate and interested professor or senior researcher, from a university center or research organization (referred to as academic mentor).
2. A selection committee will invite full applications from a subset of those who have submitted letters of intent. The full applications will be submitted through an online portal.

For more information about the letter of intent and application submission procedure, please [visit SRCD's website](#).

Application Submission and Review Timeline:

1. Deadline for Letters of Intent: **January 3, 2020, 11:59PM Eastern**
2. Notification of Status & Invitation to Submit Full Application: **End of January 2020**
3. Deadline for Finalist Full Application: **End of February 2020**
4. Notification of Fellowship Offers: **May 2020**

Application Content:

Step 1: Submit A Letter of Intent. A brief letter of intent is requested as a first step. The letter of intent should be submitted jointly by a post-doctoral candidate and a professor or senior researcher (at a university center or research organization) interested in serving as the academic mentor for a SRCD State Policy Post-doctoral Fellow. Sections from the post-doctoral candidate and academic mentor should not exceed three single-spaced pages combined. The joint letter of intent must include:

A. *From the post-doctoral candidate:*

- A description of the candidate's background in child development research, including expertise in early childhood. If possible, the candidate should describe background in early math, the development of dual language learners, or family engagement.
- A description of interests and goals related to bridging research and policy.

B. *From the academic mentor:*

- A description of research interests and how these align with the goals of the fellowship.
- A description of the professional support the academic mentor could provide to the fellow throughout the year.
- A description of an ongoing working relationship with a state executive branch office, plans for development of such a working relationship, or previous policy research that would provide background for serving as an academic mentor to a SRCD State Policy Post-doctoral 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 early childhood, indicating that a placement at the agency will be feasible.
- A description of the types of work potentially available for the fellow in the state executive branch agency focusing on early childhood, with the understanding that the specific projects and responsibilities for the fellowship year will be determined by the agency, and further, with the understanding that projects and opportunities will evolve during the course of the fellowship year.

Letters of intent should be submitted through an online portal available on the [SRCD website](#).

A selection committee will review the letters of intent and invite strong applicants to submit full applications. A link to the application website will be provided to those invited to submit full applications.

Step 2: Full Application. If invited by SRCD, full applications will require:

A. *Application materials from the post-doctoral candidate for the fellowship:* The post-doctoral candidate will be asked to enter background information on the application website and will then be asked to upload the following materials:

- *Statement of Interest* (1,000 words) that addresses:
 - professional background and qualifications for the fellowship;
 - expertise in early childhood noting background where possible in early math, the development of dual language learners, or family engagement;
 - basis for interest in the fellowship (including policy areas of interest and skills to be acquired); and
 - career goals (including how the fellowship would support those goals).
- *Current C.V.*

B. Three letters of reference for the post-doctoral candidate addressing the following:

- How does the applicant's expertise, skill set, and interest prepare the applicant for a successful fellowship experience?
- What is the applicant's knowledge base and how does the applicant's expertise relate to policy?
- To the best of your knowledge, what drives or motivates the applicant to pursue this fellowship?

C. Application materials from the academic mentor:

- *Statement of Interest* (750 words) that addresses:
 - areas of research;
 - the ways in which the academic mentor would support the post-doctoral fellow; and
 - how having a fellow with a state policy placement would add to and extend ongoing work.

The academic mentor can include sections from the letter of intent, where appropriate extending the initial letter.

- *Current C.V.*

D. Letters from staff at state executive branch agency:

- *Statement of Interest* (500 words) from an employee at the state executive branch agency in a leadership position in early childhood policy who would supervise the fellow, providing:
 - a description of professional background;
 - a description of possible projects the fellow might assist with; and
 - confirmation of interest and time for providing supervision to the fellow that would include not only provision of guidance and feedback on specific placement projects, but also provision of 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 during which the fellow could ask questions and reflect on what he or she is learning.
- *Letter of Commitment* from a representative of the state agency with appropriate authority confirming that:
 - the agency welcomes the possibility to host a SRCD State Policy Post-doctoral Fellow;
 - that such a placement would be in keeping with agency rules and regulations and state laws;
 - naming the specific supervisor; and
 - confirming that an appropriate workspace would be made available including use of a computer and telephone (used only according to agency guidelines).

The statement of interest noted above and the letter of commitment may be from the same individual, if appropriate.