



Society for Research in Child Development

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SRCD State Policy Pre-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 Pre-doctoral Fellowship for the 2020-2021 academic year. A letter of intent may be submitted by university-based professors and researchers interested in serving as the academic mentor for a SRCD State Policy Pre-doctoral Fellow or submitted jointly by a pre-doctoral student and an academic mentor.

SRCD State Policy Pre-doctoral 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 State Policy Pre-doctoral 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;
- Would be available to start the fellowship part-time on September 1, 2020;
- 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.

Benefits of the Fellowship

Goals: The aims of the pre-doctoral state fellowship program are to provide opportunities for (a) graduate students 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: SRCD State Policy Pre-doctoral Fellows will be provided with a \$30,000 stipend and the university/ fellow will receive up to \$15,000 to defray the costs of tuition and health insurance. Academic mentors will receive an honorarium of \$5,000 for the fellowship year. Funding will also be available for the academic mentor, state supervisor, and fellow to attend a national conference focusing on early childhood development.

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. SRCD will also communicate monthly with the fellow.

Roles of the State Supervisor and Academic Mentor

The intent is for each SRCD State Policy Pre-doctoral Fellow to be supported and guided by both a state supervisor within the state executive branch agency, as well as an academic mentor at the home institution. The academic mentor does not need to be the fellow's advisor from the graduate program. However, if an academic mentor is not the graduate student's advisor, a letter from the program chair will be requested confirming that participation in the fellowship is in keeping with program requirements and steps for progressing towards the doctorate. 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 (average 20 hours per week)
- 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 to go over
- 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. The online portal will be available early November. Letters of intent are due by **January 3, 2020, 11:59PM Eastern**. Pre-doctoral state fellowship letters of intent can be submitted:
 1. jointly by a fellowship candidate and an interested professor or university-based researcher (referred to as academic mentor), or
 2. by an interested academic mentor who will subsequently identify a fellowship candidate, if invited to submit a full application.
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 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 a SRCD State Policy Pre-doctoral 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:

A. 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.

B. 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 a SRCD State Policy Pre-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 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 State Policy Pre-doctoral 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.

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

- Pre-doctoral 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.
- If a pre-doctoral candidate is identified, provide a description of the background of the pre-doctoral candidate. 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.
- If a pre-doctoral candidate has yet to be identified, provide a description of the process by which the professor will identify a specific candidate.

- A description of the professional support the professor or university-based researcher would provide to the 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 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 a full application. Instructions on how to access the application website will be provided at that time.

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

- A. *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:
 - *Statement of Interest* (1,000 words) that addresses:
 - 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.
 - *Current C.V.*
- B. *Two letters of reference for the pre-doctoral candidate:*
 - 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 mentor will support the pre-doctoral student; and
 - how mentoring a SRCD State Policy Pre-doctoral 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.

- *Current C.V.*

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.

D. Letters from staff at state executive branch agency:

- *Statement of Interest* (500 words) from a state executive branch agency employee in a leadership position with the state pre-kindergarten program who would supervise the 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 that would 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 a SRCD State Policy Pre-doctoral 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 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 the letter of commitment may be from the same individual, if appropriate.