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SRCD Federal Policy Fellow Professional Portfolio Abstracts: Krystal Bichay-Awadalla, Ph.D.

2020-2021 SRCD Federal Executive Branch Policy Fellow at the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE), Administration for Children and Families (ACF), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

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Introduction: This portfolio contains products that represent my time as an Executive Branch fellow in the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation over the past two years. I include products that were used to fund new grants and contracts focused on questions of policy relevance to our office, including those focused on Head Start and Child Care. I also include two dissemination products that I helped to conceptualize in order to disseminate findings from our research projects and to introduce new projects that were newly funded and policy-relevant.

Portfolio Entry 1: Head Start Dissertation Grant Program Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)

Project Overview:

Background: The Head Start Dissertation grant program provides support for dissertation research that addresses questions that directly inform policies relevant to Head Start and/or Early Head Start programs.

Goal(s): (a) To conduct rigorous research that has the capacity to inform Head Start/Early Head Start programs, policies, and practices; (b) To build capacity in the early care and education field by supporting high-quality dissertation research and student-faculty collaboration and mentorship; (c) To support active communication, collaboration, and partnership between early career researchers and Head Start/Early Head Start Programs; and (d) To foster the exchange of current research, ideas, and information among research scholars, policymakers, and practitioners.

Contributions of Fellow:

- Provided oversight for the Head Start Dissertation grants, including supporting the Federal Project Officer's monitoring of grantees' progress and processing grant-related actions.
- Hosted grantee meetings and professional development activities to provide opportunities for sharing findings, networking, and collaboration.
- In collaboration with the Federal Project Officer, drafted a NOFO to announce the availability of funding for this grant program and to provide information about the purpose of the grant program and what the applications should include.
- Managed review of submitted applications, which involved overseeing the grant review panels and finalizing the final summary reports that were created and shared with the grantees.
- Oversaw the award of the grants through the internal ACF grant review process.

Activity Focus Keywords: Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), Grant Review

Policy Area Keywords: Head Start, Early Head Start, Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE)

Portfolio Entry 2: Building and Sustaining The Early Care and Education Workforce (BASE) Request For Proposal (RFP)

Project Overview:

Background: The BASE project aims to understand what drives workforce turnover in the early care and education (ECE) field and to evaluate promising strategies to support recruitment and retention of a qualified ECE workforce.

Goal(s): (a) To assess the knowledge base in order to understand what contributes to high rates of turnover for the ECE workforce; (b) To identify and assess existing efforts meant to increase the recruitment and retention of the ECE workforce, particularly in Head Start/Early Head Start and subsidized ECE settings; (c) To assess the availability and potential of existing data to address questions related to ECE workforce turnover, recruitment, and retention; and (d) To design and conduct data collections to examine the implementation and effectiveness of efforts currently underway to increase recruitment and retention of the ECE workforce.

Contributions of Fellow:

- Participated in conversations with our partner program offices, Office of Head Start and Office of Child Care, to determine questions of interest related to ECE workforce turnover, recruitment, and retention.
- Supported the development of the RFP to solicit applications to develop and conduct research projects to address the questions of interest.
- Supported the review of submitted proposals and prepared technical summary reports to summarize funding decisions.
- Worked with contractors and federal staff to develop research designs, implement data collections, and disseminate findings through the review of contract deliverables that included plans for each of these activities.

Activity Focus Keywords: Data Analysis, Data Collection, Request For Proposals (RFP) Development Support, RFP Proposal Evaluation Support

Policy Area Keywords: Center-based Child Care, Child Care Development Fund (CCDF), Family Child Care, Head Start, Early Head Start, Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE), Workforce

Portfolio Entry 3: Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES) Economic Conditions of Head Start Families: Connections With Social Supports And Child And Family Well-Being Brief

Project Overview:

Background: The FACES project aims to provide descriptive, nationally representative information on the characteristics, experiences, and development of Head Start children and families, and the characteristics of the Head Start programs and staff who serve them.

Goal(s): To disseminate research findings from the FACES project to various audiences, including the Office of Head Start, policymakers, practitioners, and researchers using various methods, such as briefs, PowerPoint presentations, and social media posts.

Contributions of Fellow:

- Conceptualized ideas for dissemination products with research findings, including briefs.
- Worked alongside federal staff to review dissemination products that were developed by the contractor.
- Shared dissemination products with the Office of Head Start to share findings and ensure that the products were easy to read and reflected their experiences within Head Start.
- Worked with OPRE administrative team to publish dissemination products to the website.

Activity Focus Keywords: Data Visualization, Disseminate Findings, Brief

Policy Area Keywords: Head Start, Early Head Start, Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE), School Readiness

Portfolio Entry 4: Examining the Conversion of Enrollment Slots from Head Start to Early Head Start (HS2EHS) Blog Post

Project Overview:

Background: The HS2EHS project aims to examine how and why Head Start grantees prepare for and engage in enrollment conversions. In addition, the project aims to identify the facilitators and barriers to conversion of enrollment slots and the provision of high-quality Early Head Start services that meet community needs.

Goal(s): (a) To assess the knowledge base in order to understand how and why programs convert Head Start slots to Early Head Start slots and to identify the facilitators and barriers to the conversion process and to

providing quality services following conversion; (b) To assess the availability and potential of existing data to address questions related to the characteristics and features of grantees that convert slots and how they leverage data to support conversion; and (c) To design and conduct data collections to examine questions of interest related to the conversion of enrollment slots from Head Start to Early Head Start.

Contributions of Fellow:

- Participated in conversations with the Office of Head Start to determine questions of interest related to the conversion of enrollment slots from Head Start to Early Head Start.
- Supported the development of the RFP to solicit applications to develop and conduct research projects to address the questions of interest.
- Supported the review of submitted proposals and prepared technical summary reports to summarize funding decisions.
- Worked with contractors and federal staff to develop research designs, implement data collections, and disseminate findings through the review of contract deliverables that included plans for each of these activities.
- Developed blog post with team members to introduce this newly funded project.

Activity Focus Keywords: Disseminate Project Information, Blog
Policy Area Keywords: Head Start, Early Head Start, Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE)

Read more about Krystal's fellowship experience