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Introducing the 2022-2023 SRCD U.S. Policy Fellows

The Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD) is pleased to announce the 2022-2023 SRCD U.S. Policy Fellows.

The SRCD U.S. Policy Fellowship Programs include placement opportunities in federal congressional offices as well as federal and state executive branch agencies. The purpose of the fellowship programs is to provide researchers with immersive opportunities to learn about policy development, implementation, and evaluation, and to use their research skills in child development to inform public policy at the federal or state level.

Learn more about the SRCD U.S. Policy Fellowship Programs

2022 - 2023 SRCD Federal Policy Fellows

SRCD Federal Executive Branch Policy Fellows



Marissa Abbott, Ph.D.

Dr. Marissa Abbott is a second-year SRCD Federal Executive Branch Fellow in the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Her ongoing work at ASPE focuses on child welfare, primarily data linking projects between public child welfare and Medicaid agencies. During her first year in the fellowship, Dr. Abbott also worked on projects related to Family First Prevention Services Act implementation and explored well-being assessment across human services programs. In her second year in the fellowship, Dr. Abbott looks forward to building on this work. Dr. Abbott is an interdisciplinary social scientist who blends public health, social work, and human development perspectives to examine programs and policies surrounding child maltreatment prevention, intervention, and family well-being. Dr. Abbott received her Ph.D. in Social Welfare from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Her dissertation critiqued how researchers and clinicians assess childhood adversity in at-risk families and explored an alternative measure that captures positive experiences from childhood that exemplify family resilience. She holds a B.A. in Epidemiology and M.P.H. from the University of Rochester. Before receiving her Ph.D., Dr. Abbott also worked as a California Epidemiologic Investigation Service Fellow at the California Department of Public Health, focusing on child maltreatment prevention. Read more in her SRCD Policy Fellow Spotlight.



Carly Champagne, Ph.D.

Dr. Carly Champagne is a SRCD Federal Executive Branch Fellow in the Office of Child Care (OCC) in the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Carly is an interdisciplinary social scientist who draws from education, assessment, and human development to improve the lived experiences of children and families. Carly received her Ph.D. in Education from Temple University with a concentration in educational psychology and focus in early childhood. Carly's research focused on how academic environments shape the development of children's achievement motivation, such as the influence of teacher-child interactions on children's feelings of belonging and perceived competence. As a postdoctoral researcher, she evaluated the reliability, validity, cultural relevance and usability of educational and psychological assessments. She also facilitated program evaluations and developed theories of change in collaboration with community organizations such as United For Brownsville. Carly instructed multiple undergraduate courses, including child development, cognitive development and learning theories, abnormal psychology, and program evaluation. She taught in a variety of formats (e.g., in person and virtual, synchronous and asynchronous) and supervised fieldwork for preservice middle school teachers. As a legislative fellow in the US Senate, Carly worked on education, health, and housing portfolios including preK-higher education, mental health, child nutrition, community development and disaster relief policy. She is interested in improving children's well-being and access to culturally relevant education by addressing approaches to teacher training and delivery of social services. Read more in her SRCD Policy Fellow Spotlight.



Diane Gumina, Ph.D.

Dr. Diane Gumina is a SRCD Federal Executive Branch Fellow in the Pregnancy and Perinatology Branch (PPB) at the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) in the National Institutes of Health (NIH) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). At NICHD she works on supporting extramural research programs related to normal and abnormal placental development, and common obstetric complications such as preterm birth, fetal growth restriction, and preeclampsia. One goal of the PPB is to improve ways to diagnose, treat, and prevent such complications, which is one of Dr. Gumina's long-standing interests. She is also interested in understanding how exposure to a suboptimal in utero environment impacts the long-term health of both the mother and baby. Her doctorate work at the University of Colorado, Anschutz Medical Campus focused on elucidating the cellular mechanisms responsible for reduced development of the placental vasculature associated with severe fetal growth restriction. Dr. Gumina earned her M.S. in Cellular and Developmental Biology from the University of Colorado, Anschutz Medical Campus and a B.A. in Molecular, Cellular, and Developmental Biology from the University of Colorado, Boulder.



Shirley Huang, Ph.D.

Dr. Shirley Huang (she/her) is a SRCD Federal Executive Branch Fellow in the *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) in the National Institutes of Health (NIH) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Shirley is eager to review research portfolios and grant proposals, develop child research agendas, and understand the roles and responsibilities of a grant program officer. Shirley completed her Ph.D. at the University of Colorado Boulder. Her research interests are in bilingual language development, cultural-linguistic differences, and emotion language skills. Specifically, she studied how cultural and language differences influence emotion language development in bilingual children. Prior to her research, Shirley completed her clinical M.S. in speech-language pathology at Boston University. She worked with children with developmental disorders (e.g., dyslexia, Autism, Down Syndrome) and children and families from minority backgrounds. Her clinical experiences inspired her research and policy interests to advance health equity. Read more in her SRCD Policy Fellow Spotlight.



Kelsey McKee, Ph.D.

Dr. Kelsey McKee is a SRCD Federal Executive Branch Fellow in the Office of Head Start in the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. She is a developmental scientist with a particular interest in how parents promote their children's early development, particularly in the context of poverty. Dr. McKee holds a Ph.D. in Human Development as well as certificates in Measurement, Statistics, and Evaluation and Population Studies from University of Maryland and a B.S. in Psychology from Arizona State University. While at the University of Maryland, Dr. McKee worked as a Graduate Research Assistant conducting research on a randomized controlled trial of a parenting intervention, as well as conducting program evaluations of graduate research training programs. Prior to graduate school, Dr. McKee worked as a home visitor delivering parenting interventions within the state child welfare system in Arizona. She is committed to working to promote programs and policies that are effective in supporting parents and children's early childhood development. Read more in her SRCD Policy Fellow Spotlight.



Kylee Probert, Ph.D.

Dr. Kylee Probert is a SRCD Federal Executive Branch Fellow in the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPRE) in the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Prior to her fellowship, Kylee obtained her Ph.D. in Human Development and Family Science (HDFS) at Oregon State University, where her graduate work spanned the areas of early childhood and child welfare. Her research on foster parent retention utilized strong state and local partnerships to uncover needed supports and subsequent self-efficacy development for foster parents, particularly for tribal foster homes. She also assisted in the development and implementation of a small, state level intervention to support new and applying home-based child care educators (HBCC) in light of 2014 Reauthorization of the Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG). In OPRE, Kylee will assist in assessing the needs of Tribal Head Start programs and related 2019 Head Start Family and Child Experiences (FACES) data, while also working towards supporting the HBCC workforce and subsequent home-based child care quality. Kylee especially values the importance of research translation and dissemination in all of her policy-related work. Read more in her SRCD Policy Fellow Spotlight.



Kizzann Ashana "Shana" Ratcliff, Ph.D.

Dr. Kizzann Ashana "Shana" Ratcliff (she/her) is a SRCD Federal Executive Branch Fellow in the Office of Head Start (OHS) in the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Dr. Ratcliff received her B.A. in Psychology from Pomona College and her Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from The Pennsylvania State University, with minors in Developmental Science and Education Intervention Science. Prior to the SRCD Fellowship, Dr. Ratcliff completed her post-doctoral training in early childhood and perinatal behavioral health at Children's National Hospital. Her research and policy interests include early social and emotional development, improving access to and equity in child and family behavioral health services, and addressing implementation/sustainability barriers in early childhood programs. Read more in her SRCD Policy Fellow Spotlight.



Virginia Salo, Ph.D.

Dr. Virginia Salo is a second-year SRCD Federal Executive Branch Fellow in the *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) in the National Institutes of Health (NIH) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Her research examines the interactions that occur between children and their caregivers during the first few years of life; specifically, how patterns within these interactions develop and predict individual differences in children's social-cognitive and language development. Her graduate work focused on preverbal infant communicative development and mechanisms supporting infant learning from interactions with their caregivers. Prior to the SRCD Fellowship, Dr. Salo completed a NIH National Research Service Award (NRSA) F32 Postdoctoral Fellowship at Vanderbilt University in the Department of Psychology and Human Development. During this fellowship, she examined potentially modifiable targets for promoting positive caregiver–child interactions. Dr. Salo earned a Ph.D. in Human Development from the University of Maryland, College Park, a M.S. in Psychology from Villanova University, and a B.A. in Public Relations and Psychology from Syracuse University. Read more in her SRCD Policy Fellow Spotlight.



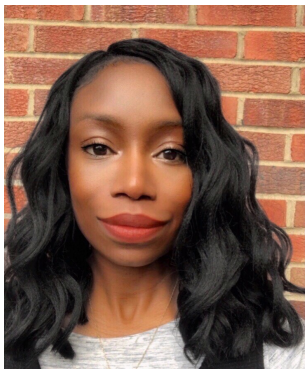
Neda Senehi, Ph.D.

Dr. Neda Senehi is a second-year SRCD Federal Executive Branch Fellow in the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPRE) in the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. She is currently working on research and evaluation projects in the Head Start and Child Care portfolios at OPRE including Head Start REACH and Early Care and Education Research Scholars projects. Dr. Senehi holds an MA in Clinical Psychology and a Ph.D. in Human Development and Family studies from Michigan State University. Her doctoral work focused on examination of parental mentalization, parental emotion-socialization, and self-regulation in young children from low-income families. She completed her postdoctoral fellowship in Developmental Psychobiology, Psychopathology, and Behavior funded by National Institute of Health-Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Award at the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus where she examined parental and child's stress response indicated by salivary and hair cortisol, parent-child relationships, and social-emotional development. Her research has focused on caregiving quality and stress-related health and development in ethnic-racially minoritized families and childcare settings facing adversity including Early Head Start (EHS) children and families, EHS teachers and preschoolers, tribal communities, and parents experiencing mental illness and childhood trauma. Read more in her SRCD Policy Fellow Spotlight.



Tanya Tavassolie, Ph.D.

Dr. Tanya Tavassolie is a SRCD Federal Executive Branch Fellow in the Office of Head Start (OHS) in the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. She will be working in the Policy, Oversight, and Planning office. Tanya just completed the SRCD/AAAS Congressional fellowship where she worked on the education, early childhood, and child welfare portfolio in Senator Maggie Hassan's office. Dr. Tavassolie completed her postdoctoral position at the University of Maryland where she led an ongoing evaluation for a research-to-program partnership with a Head Start center in Washington, DC. While there, she provided technical assistance for early educators around data usage and utilization. She also led an evaluation for an Early Head Start Childcare Partnership. Dr. Tavassolie is a developmental psychologist and received her Ph.D. from George Mason University in Applied Developmental Psychology in 2018. Her graduate work focused on investigating racial and ethnic equity issues in the implementation of elementary education policies. She earned her M.A. from George Mason University as well and her B.A. in Neuroscience from Franklin and Marshall College. Read more in her SRCD Policy Fellow Spotlight.



Tamarie Willis, Ph.D.

Dr. Tamarie Willis is a SRCD Federal Executive Branch Fellow in the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPRE) in the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Prior to becoming a fellow at SRCD, she worked at the Center for Behavioral Health and Justice where she managed all federal and state grants related to reentry initiatives. There, she managed reentry programs in nine prisons and three jails in the state of Michigan for individuals with cooccurring substance use and mental illness who were returning to the community and their families. Her graduate work examines the interface of the criminal legal system and child welfare public policies, specifically the impact of child welfare policy on incarcerated parents and the clinical, educational, and behavioral outcomes for their children in state care. Dr. Willis is committed to the continuum of research, advocacy, policy, and practice with a continued focus on addressing the often-racialized inequities in the criminal justice policy and child welfare practices. Dr. Willis holds a Ph.D. in Social Work with minors in Criminal Justice and Statistics from Wayne State University. Read more in her SRCD Policy Fellow Spotlight.



Kylie Garber, Ph.D.

Dr. Kylie Garber is a SRCD Federal Congressional Branch Policy Fellow in the Office of Senator Tim Kaine. Prior to the fellowship, Dr. Garber studied the relation between early care and education quality and academic and cognitive development into elementary school and adulthood. She was part of the North Carolina site of the Early Learning Network project, the Abecedarian Study, State Pre-K evaluations in North Carolina and Georgia at the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute. In 2019-2020 Dr. Garber was a SRCD Predoctoral State Policy Fellow placed in the North Carolina Division of Child Development and Early Education. During the Predoctoral fellowship she contributed to strategic planning for the Preschool Development Grant awarded to North Carolina in 2019, creating an evaluation tool for infant-toddler technical assistants and writing requests for proposals to support the child care workforce. She earned her B.S. in Psychology from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. Read more in her SRCD Policy Fellow Spotlight.

2022 - 2023 SRCD State Policy Fellows



Alex Busuito, Ph.D.

Dr. Alex Busuito is a second-year SRCD State Policy Post-Doctoral Fellow in the Center for Perinatal and Early Childhood Health, Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDoH). Their work at RIDoH includes initiatives to increase access to Family Home Visiting services for at-risk children and families, including securing Medicaid funding for and evaluating families' engagement with home visiting programs. Dr. Busuito completed their clinical internship at Brown Medical School and received their Ph.D. in Child Clinical Psychology from the Pennsylvania State University. As a graduate student, Dr. Busuito was a Doris Duke Fellow for the Promotion of Child Wellbeing and a National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellow. They also spent nearly ten years as a community mental health clinician, working primarily with trauma-exposed children and caregivers. Dr. Busuito's research seeks to identify mechanisms that perpetuate the transmission of poverty and trauma-related risk from caregivers to children. Dr. Busuito is dedicated to leveraging developmental and clinical science to shape policy solutions that target sources of intergenerational disadvantage in order to enhance child wellbeing. Read more in their SRCD Policy Fellow Spotlight.



Lara Markovitz, Ph.D.

Dr. Lara Markovitz is a SRCD State Policy Post-Doctoral Fellow in the Office of Child Support (OCS) in the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS). She is currently engaged in child support policy research and family-centered program development. Lara holds a Ph.D. in Social Work from Washington University in St. Louis, where her doctoral training was supported by a National Institute of Mental Health T32 Pre-doctoral Fellowship. Her research has focused on the effect of policy design on father involvement. Lara's dissertation examined the influence of child support policy design on father identity. She has been an active member of Michigan Action Plan for Father Involvement (MAP-FI) and the Metro Detroit Fatherhood Policy Initiative since 2020. Prior to her doctoral studies, Lara served as a bilingual (Spanish) social worker and case manager in community-based health and mental health settings and schools throughout New York City. Dr. Markovitz completed her Master of Science in Social Work at Columbia University in 2012 and her Bachelor of Arts at the University of Michigan in 2006. Read more in her SRCD Policy Fellow Spotlight.



Lillie Moffett, Ph.D.

Dr. Lillie Moffett is a second-year SRCD State Policy Post-Doctoral Fellow in the California Department of Education, Opportunities for All Branch. Dr. Moffett received her Ph.D. in Education and Psychology from the University of Michigan where she specialized in preK curricula targeting the development of young children's math and executive functioning skills. As a recipient of an IES Fellowship in Causal Inference in Education Policy Research, she has also served as a collaborator with the Boston Public Schools Prekindergarten Program on child-level classroom observations of instructional experiences from preK to second grade. And as an NSF Graduate Research Fellow and ACF Head Start Dissertation Grant recipient, she has also gained experience working closely with Child 360 preschool coaches in Los Angeles, and supporting Head Start teachers on their administration of the Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP) assessment. During her fellowship period she will be working on several projects related to California's rollout of universal preK programs, updating learning standards for prek, and expanding the use of preK math and literacy assessments in California. As a Los Angeles native, her ultimate goal for this fellowship and beyond is to continue to leverage research-informed policies and practices to improve the quality of public preK programs in California. Read more in her SRCD Policy Fellow Spotlight.



Faith VanMeter, Ph.D.

Dr. Faith VanMeter is a SRCD State Policy Post-Doctoral Fellow in the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS), Child Safety and Permanence Division, Promotion and Prevention Unit. She is currently working on projects related to improving the evaluation of parent outreach programs and developing a comprehensive, culturally responsive continuum of care that aims to reduce encounters families, and particularly Black, Brown and Indigenous families, have with the child welfare system by providing access to other systems of support. Dr. VanMeter received her PhD in developmental psychology from the University of Minnesota's Institute of Child Development. Her most recent research used state administrative data from all counties in Minnesota to establish a link between foster care placement characteristics and the likelihood and timing of initial contact with the juvenile justice system. During her time in graduate school, Dr. VanMeter became increasingly passionate about utilizing her developmental knowledge in applied fields. Through collaborations with the University of Minnesota Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare (CASCW) and Pennsylvania State University's Research-to-Policy Collaboration (RPC), she gained experience in the child welfare field and learned about the barriers of and potential solutions to translating developmental research into policy. Ultimately through this fellowship and throughout her career, Dr. VanMeter seeks to make systems-level change that will improve the wellbeing of vulnerable Minnesotan children and families.