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2023 SRCD Federal Policy Fellow Spotlight: Carly Champagne, Ph.D.

Carly Champagne is an SRCD Federal Executive Branch Policy Fellow in the Administration for Children and Families in the Office of Child Care.

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In a few sentences, what is your role at the agency you work for?

I work in the Administration for Children and Families in the Office of Child Care. My work cuts across the Program Operations and Policy Divisions. I also have a co-lead role in our Equity Action Plan Workgroup. My current work is primarily on Tribal policy and the Racial Equity Impact Assessment with the US Territories.

What has been the most memorable project you have completed during your time at the agency?

Although the project is not technically complete, it has been an incredible experience to co-lead the Racial Equity Impact Assessment with the US Territories, particularly focused on getting direct feedback from the five US Territories with CCDF programs on how federal child care policies impact equitable service delivery to children and families in their communities and how we can better meet their needs.

How do you think the fellowship has helped further your career?

Working in policy has been a game-changer for me, especially in considering my options and interests for my career going forward – I definitely see myself staying in policy in some form. This fellowship has also been an incredible complement to my congressional fellowship experience, being able to see the implementation and regulatory side of policy work versus legislative.

What words of wisdom might you pass on to someone who is interested in SRCD's fellowship program?

Never take yourself out of the running! Don't be intimidated if you don't have previous policy experience – neither did I. Working in policy as an academic is a transformative experience that can facilitate a career pivot or provide an incredible growth opportunity for your perspectives and knowledge as a faculty member or researcher. It changes how you view your field, specific issues and solutions – for the better.

What piqued your interest in working in policy?

I became interested in policy early on in graduate school, particularly in seeing the gap between research and practice and realizing the key role that policy can play in either supporting or creating barriers for children and families to thrive, especially in the context of education and classroom environments, but across sectors as well. The best research is only as good as it can be communicated and implemented on the ground, and that requires trusting, effective relationships with practitioners (e.g., K12 teachers) as well as policymakers (e.g., state government officials).

What do you like to do in your free time?

I'm a musician – I sing and play piano, and especially love jazz!