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2023 SRCD Federal Policy Fellow Spotlight: Kylee Probert, Ph.D.

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

I work in the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, in the Division of Child and Family Development. The office is responsible for research that informs the development, efficiency, and performance of programs that serve children and families. My work spans many of those research efforts that are relevant to Head Start and Child Care programs.

What piqued your interest in working in policy?

In graduate school I gravitated towards questions about ways to support those who support the development and wellbeing of children – how to better serve the diverse needs of families and the people who support them, and how to better use research in innovative ways to inform those efforts. Working in an office that connects research with policy seemed like a great way to bridge my research experience with those interests.

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

I've learned so much about where I fit in to the landscape of policy related to children and families. It has given me the ability (and the confidence) to identify what research and evaluation skills I excel in, and the resources to continue to hone my research identity in ways that feel meaningful to me. For example, one aspect of my research identity that is important to me is my experience working with tribes. ACF is innovative in their engagement in programs serving American Indian/Alaska Native families, and I've had the opportunity to be involved in many of those efforts and make connections with people who are interested in similar work.

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

My work on the Home Based Child Care Supply and Quality Project (HBCCSQ) has been very memorable. I studied HBCC providers in graduate school and I learned about the gaps that existed in research as well as in the policy space. This project at OPRE targets those gaps exactly. Suddenly I was in conversations with some of the most front-running researchers on this topic – some of whom I had cited in my dissertation! I've been a part of the entire study process – from implementing innovative and equitable strategies into the sampling and study designs, to dissemination. Recently I was given the opportunity to present on research findings for our program office audience, which was an incredible reflection of my own growth and the growth of the field as a whole – something my graduate student self would be proud of.

What has been your favorite part of SRCD's fellowship? Please explain why.

My favorite part of the fellowship has been the people I've met. Not only do we have an incredible group of state, executive, and congressional fellows and fellow alumni, but I've met lots of amazing people at OPRE, the program offices we collaborate with, and the contractors and other organizations we work with.

What is your favorite place you have traveled?

I've had several opportunities to visit Switzerland and its neighboring countries in the last few years, where I visited every lake, waterfall, mountain, and city that I could find. I also visited castles in Germany, beaches in Italy, and alpine vistas in Austria. These are some memories I'll never forget!