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2023 SRCD Federal Policy Fellow Spotlight: Shirley Huang, Ph.D.

Shirley Huang is a Federal Executive Policy Fellow at the *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development in the National Institutes of Health.

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

I work within the Child Development and Behavior Branch at the *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) in the National Institutes of Health (NIH). I support the Language Development and Multilingualism and Literacy and Related Learning Disabilities research portfolios. My roles and responsibilities include contributing to the development of a research agenda to move the scientific field forward, managing grants to ensure NIH policies are adhered, and communicating

funding opportunities and program objectives to the scientific community.

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

Currently, I am working on two main projects during my fellowship. The first project is an investigation of the historical investment of bilingual research at NICHD to understand what the gaps in bilingual research are and where are there opportunities for future directions of bilingual research. This is important work to help advance the field of bilingualism. The second project is supporting a trans-NIH initiative on advancing our understanding of children who are late talkers. The goal is to provide parents, teachers, pediatricians, and other caregivers with the information they need to help late talking children grow and thrive in school and other learning environments.

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

Get started early! Reach out to current and past SRCD fellows to learn about their experiences and what you can do to set yourself up to be a competitive applicant. Before I started applying, I met with 3 different SRCD fellows to learn about their fellowship placements, what they did, and what their career goals are. Learn as much as you can so you can be well-informed when writing your application and conducting interviews. Policy language is different from academic language, and so I encourage you to get feedback on your application from people outside of academia.

What piqued your interest in working in policy?

While my clinical work provides individualized services to children and families and my research supports evidence-based practice, I believe it is policy that can make a lasting impact on science and healthcare systems. As a speech-language pathologist who worked in an underserved community, I saw firsthand how cultural-linguistic barriers impact children and families' access to quality and timely health and special educational services. As a researcher, I sought to deepen my scientific understanding about how dual cultural experiences influence bilingual children's development to provide more culturally responsive care. During my research training, I became increasingly interested in learning about the translation from research to policy to make a larger impact on the families we serve in the healthcare system.

What has been an interesting professional development opportunity you have completed during the fellowship?

In May during Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Heritage (AANHPI) month, I attended a day long AANHPI leadership conference hosted by the White House. The goal of the conference was to coordinate government agencies to advance equity, justice, and opportunities for AA and NHPI communities. I'm not exaggerating when I say that this was the best professional development conference I've ever attended! I was inspired to see guest speakers on the stage who hold high leadership positions and look like me. During this conference, I attended workshops to develop my leadership skills and networked with people from different federal agencies. The most important thing I took away from this conference was how to lead from my cultural values.

What do you like to do in your free time?

Lately, I have been enjoying all that DC summer has to offer! There are so many fun and free activities in the DC area. I enjoy going to see live music or dance performances, exploring the farmer's markets, biking down to the Lincoln memorial center, or stopping by any of the museums. I enjoy roaming around different DC neighborhoods and learning what makes them unique. I also started going to a language exchange group in DC and practicing my French! I love meeting people who also share my love of language and culture! Our fellows' cohort also started a book club where we talk, eat, and laugh! That brings me a lot of joy!