Congressional Placements

Be where policy is happening. Apply to work on Capitol Hill. Congressional fellows learn about policy development, implementation, and evaluation, and how to use developmental science to inform public policy in the highest levels in the United States.

APPLY Federal Placements State Placements

"It was the most fun year of my life. Everyone is excited to have you there. They want to help you figure out where you can fit into the Congressional office's work. The office was looking to me to speak to the child development work. It was a very empowering experience to be involved in the policymaking process that way."



– Alaina Flannigan, Congressional Fellow (2017-2018)

About the Congressional Placement

Congressional fellows are on the frontlines of how Congress thinks about early childhood issues. They use evidence-based methods to draft memos and briefings. They advise their members of Congress on relevant portfolio matters pertinent to their specific office. And they meet with constituents and advocates to hear how their office's policy decisions will affect different groups.

Congressional fellows are accepted into the SRCD Policy Fellowship Program each spring, and start on September 1st, with the rest of the cohort. After receiving a special Congressional orientation, they interview with offices in mid-September to find their match. SRCD connects the incoming Congressional fellow with alumni from the program, to help new Congressional fellows navigate the early days of interviewing and starting in an office. Congressional fellows typically work in-person full time on Capitol Hill.

"History happens when you're in the Fellowship. When I was in Congress, an election changed the political map halfway through my fellowship. It was a tremendous growth opportunity for me to see the change."



– Sara Vecchiotti, Congressional and Federal Agency Fellow (2004-2006)

Let's Talk Politics

Are you on the fence, because you want to see dynamic policy in action, but you don't want to lobby? Are you worried about partisan politics interfering with your ability to bring evidence to bear?

First and foremost, our fellows are not lobbyists, nor are they ever expected to give political advice to their office. Our fellows are proudly nonpartisan experts who are supported by SRCD – a nonpartisan organization – to give neutral and impartial judgements based on scientific evidence. In this placement, you will get to see how the sausage is made, but your role is one of a technical expert, not a political advisor.

Still concerned? Congressional fellows find their own placement offices, with the support of SRCD and its fellowship partner organization, the American Association for the Advancement of Science. At the beginning of the fellowship year, fellows identify and interview with specific offices that they choose. During this process, SRCD will connect you with former Congressional fellows that can provide insight into the dynamics of offices. If you do not like the dynamics of an office, you simply look for another office. Fellows can also interview and be placed in Congressional committees rather than directly in offices, which provide a different vantage on the policy process on Capitol Hill. You have many options, depending on where you interview!

Learn more about the work a recent Congressional fellow did in this Spotlight post.

The Work You'll Do

Days are not dull for Congressional fellows. You will work in person on Capitol Hill, where you will have a mentor in your office. Your work will be dynamic – most fellows are given a portfolio of issues and tasked with advising their office on those topics, meeting with constituents, writing briefs and more. Fellows have helped support Members of Congress in their committee hearings, they have written childcare bills, and they have helped talk about the evidence on the effectiveness of Head Start with offices.

Congressional fellows are exposed to a wide variety of responsibilities. In particular, you might:

1. Assist with drafting legislation.
2. Conduct and distill research to inform program authorization or appropriations.
3. Advise members of Congress about actions in support of children based on research evidence.
4. Assist with congressional hearings and briefings.
5. Draft memos, policy briefs, and/or speeches for the Member.

Why should you apply?

This is a once in a lifetime opportunity to see policymaking that affects every child and family in the U.S. up close. You will not only be part of your SRCD cohort, but you will also meet other program's fellows on Capitol Hill, and form networks with them. Your work could make a direct impact on children and family's lives.

Here are some other things to consider, as you consider this placement:

- Determine your interest in policy development vs. implementation. Congressional fellowships deal with authorizing and funding policies and programs, whereas state and federal executive agencies are more involved in policy implementation.
- Congressional fellows are often given multiple projects and meet regularly with constituents and others. Their work can be fast paced and can include working on legislation, using their research to inform program authorization.
- Your expertise is in young children, ages birth through eight. The Heising-Simons foundation generously supports the Congressional fellowship so Congressional offices sites do not have to pay for fellows. The accepted fellows for the Congressional placement must work in areas that align with the Heising-Simons funding priorities.

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