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2024 SRCD State Policy Fellow Spotlight: Lara Markovitz, Ph.D.

Lara Markovitz is an SRCD State Policy Post-Doctoral Fellow in the Office of Child Support (OCS) in the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS).

AUTHOR

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

I am a second-year fellow at the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services in the Office of Child Support, Program Development Division. My work focuses on Office of Child Support diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives, including the Community Advisory Council, community listening sessions, equity impact assessment, and a navigator pilot program.

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

My time as a fellow has been formative in numerous ways, but the mentoring I have received from the fellowship, my placement supervisors, academic mentor, colleagues at the Office of Child Support, and current and former fellows has been exceptional. It has been exciting to get to know others with similar interests and goals and to learn from their experiences.

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

Over the course of the fellowship, I have been heavily involved in the development of the Michigan Office of Child Support Navigator Pilot. The aim of the pilot is to increase parent and caregiver access to child support-related resources and information. I have had the opportunity to hone my grant writing skills, develop evaluation goals, and facilitate meaningful collaboration with key stakeholders, including the Office of Child Support Community Advisory Council and the Pilot Steering Committee. Through my work on the navigator pilot, I have gained rich experience in policy research, writing, project management, facilitation, and presentation skills.

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

This fellowship has introduced me to myriad ways to bring together my interests in federal and state policy research, program design and devaluation, and collaboration with community partners and other stakeholders. Having the time, space, and encouragement to seek out trainings, mentoring, new types of projects and skills at this stage of my training has been invaluable.

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

Last year, my supervisor took the time to offer classes about a range of topics including federal and state child support policy research, policy review, and child support financials. This year, we have weekly mentoring meetings focused on legislation: how to track, review, and evaluate child support-related legislation and how to draft legislative memos.

What do you like to do in your free time?

I love to dance and over the years, I've studied salsa, flamenco, ballet, Afro-Cuban, modern, and Congolese dance.

More about the 2023-2024 Cohort