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2024 SRCD Federal Policy Fellow Spotlight: Shirley Huang, Ph.D., CCC-SLP

Dr. Shirley Huang (she/her) is a second-year SRCD Federal Executive Branch Fellow in the *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) in the National Institutes of Health (NIH) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

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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). 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. I also work on some projects at the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE) at the Administration for Children and Families (ACF). I support research contracts and cooperative agreements that focus on early childhood education, Head Start programs, and disabilities and inclusion.

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

I have been working on a research portfolio analysis project since year 1 of my fellowship program. In year 1, I investigated the historical investment of bilingual research at NICHD to understand the patterns and gaps in bilingual research. This year, I am working with program officers to identify opportunities for future directions of bilingual research, engage with other federal agencies, and solicit information from the scientific community on the current state of the field. This is important groundwork to advance the field of bilingualism.

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 your favorite aspect of SRCD's fellowship?

One of my favorite aspects of the SRCD Fellowships is the amazing connections in the field. I love that the SRCD network is so large and well-connected. If I am interested in learning more about an agency, office, or topic area, I can easily reach out for some connections!

What is your favorite place you have traveled?

I have been so lucky to travel to some beautiful places in the world. This past summer, I travelled to Portugal--which was also the first time I travelled internationally since COVID! I enjoy travelling because I love to learn about other cultures, traditions, and languages. Lisbon in Portugal was one of my favorite places because the color palette and patterns of the city buildings were so breathtaking. There were beautiful, patterned tiles of green, pink, blue, and yellow hues.

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