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SRCD State Policy Fellow Spotlight: Sara Nozadi

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What is your role at the agency you work for?

During my fellowship at the New Mexico Early Childhood Education and Care Department, I have worked on a range of projects aimed at improving access to early childhood programs, including home visiting, early intervention, and childcare. My efforts also focused on strengthening local early childhood system building coalitions across New Mexico and enhancing the alignment and coordination of care systems in the areas of maternal health and early childhood.

What piqued your interest in working in policy?

My goal in joining this policy fellowship was to deepen my understanding of the early childhood landscape both in New Mexico and nationally, while also learning how academic researchers can better utilize research tools and data to serve communities.

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

As a developmental scientist, this fellowship has deepened my understanding of the real needs of communities and how research and data can address these needs. It has also enhanced my appreciation for the importance of listening to communities and families when formulating research questions.

Additionally, I have gained valuable insights into program design and evaluation, partnering with diverse stakeholders, engaging families in the design, research, and implementation processes, and facilitating collaborative meetings.

What is something you learned in the last month *outside of your field*?

As a second-year fellow, I am leading a project to develop a sustainability toolkit designed to guide emerging coalitions and strengthen the work of existing ones. Throughout this process, I have researched and gained knowledge on topics with broad applications across sectors, such as models of governance, leadership, and decision-making, as well as strategies for creating sustainable and independent programs.

Why should someone else apply for this fellowship?

The fellowship offers a valuable opportunity to explore different areas of policy work before committing to a policy career. Fellows gain direct or indirect exposure to various types of work outside academia, which is invaluable in helping them determine where they want to work and the career path they wish to pursue.

What do you like to do in your free time?

In my free time, I would like to spend time with family and friends and watch movies.