

In Face of Sweeping Federal Rule, SRCD President Calls for Preservation of the Nation's Commitment to Independent Research in the Public Interest

The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has proposed major changes to federally funded research that could weaken scientific independence, limit key developmental research, and undermine evidence supporting children and families. SRCD President Dr. Jennifer Lansford urges member action before the July 13, 2026 comment deadline.

SRCD Presidential Statement:

The Office of Management and Budget's Newly Proposed Rule Would Reverse the Nation's Commitment to Independent Research in the Public Interest

The federal Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has released a [sweeping proposal](#) that would fundamentally alter how federally funded research is prioritized and conducted. The proposal represents a significant departure from longstanding rules and norms governing U.S. scientific research and public-private partnership. If implemented, it would weaken scientific independence, reduce the ability of developmental scientists to pursue important lines of inquiry, and undermine the evidence base needed to improve the lives of children and families.

Federally funded research must serve the public good. For decades, the federal government has been a vital partner in advancing developmental science, through both funding and policy. Federal-private partnerships have improved pediatric outcomes, strengthened child welfare systems and education policy, and deepened understanding of how families, communities, and environments shape human development across the lifespan.

This new OMB proposal would undermine three critical bedrocks of the scientific enterprise that have enabled such discoveries.

Scientific Independence. Several provisions of OMB's [notice](#) would weaken longstanding safeguards for scientific independence by increasing political discretion in funding decisions, expanding federal authority to suspend or terminate awards, and create First Amendment barriers to sharing research with the public and through conferences, publications, and collaboration with scientific societies, such as SRCF. Together, these changes would destabilize the infrastructure that supports evidence generation and its translation into policy and practice and would further weaken public trust in science. A constantly shifting set of research priorities would also impede the long-term, strategic focus needed for scientific breakthroughs and innovation and disincentivize scholars from pursuing federal funding.

Research Relevance. The proposal also undermines research relevance, by threatening or prohibiting examinations of how place, race, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, immigration status, and economic class shape child development and well-being. Research that studies identity and context is essential to understanding risk, resilience, opportunity, and what policies and practices work best for different children and families.^{1, 2} Limiting such inquiry risks producing evidence that is less representative, less applicable, and ultimately less useful for improving outcomes for all children and reducing disparities.

Global Collaboration. Scientific progress depends on partnerships that cross disciplines, institutions, communities, and borders. When basic science is conducted only in high-income, Western countries, the experiences of children and youth in these countries end up defining what is known about development.³ Young people adapt to the circumstances in which they live, so to understand development fully, research must be conducted in the range of cultural contexts in which development occurs. International collaborations, collecting data in a wide range of countries, and incorporating diverse cultural perspectives are central to this effort. Policies that discourage international collaboration risk isolating U.S. researchers,

contributing to researcher exodus, and weakening the nation's position as the global leader in science and innovation research and publication.

We encourage SRCD members to actively engage in constructive opposition to this proposal. There are two core ways to get engaged:

1. Shape a formal SRCD response to OMB. Please express your interest to the SRCD Policy Team at policy@srcd.org.
2. Voice your opposition through this [advocacy portal](#). When doing so, we advise you to:
 1. write a personalized comment, so it will be uniquely counted,
 2. state your opposition in your own words,
 3. detail 1 or 2 likely negative impacts of the rule on your scholarship, grants and global collaborations;
 4. consider providing an accounting of how the rule would raise your costs of doing research.

With appreciation,

Jennifer E. Lansford, Ph.D.
SRCD President

Justification:

This Presidential Statement aligns with SRCD's policy priorities as it relates to federally funded research and advancement of the broader scientific enterprise that supports child development research. In the past, SRCD has issued Presidential Statements in response to direct threats to the research enterprise stemming from Executive Orders affecting science, research funding, and evidence-based work.

References:

1. National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. (2023). Closing the Opportunity Gap for Young Children. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.
2. Society for Research in Child Development. (2024, June 12). SRCD anti-racism task force full final report. <https://www.srcd.org/srcd-anti-racism-task-force/srcd-anti-racism-task-force-full-final-report>
3. International Perspectives in Psychology: Research, Practice, Consultation. (2019). The Importance of International Collaborative Research for Advancing Understanding of Child and Youth Development. American Psychological Association: <https://econtent.hogrefe.com/doi/10.1037/ipp0000102>