NEWS | POSTED AUGUST 24, 2026

2026 SRCD State Policy Fellow Spotlight: Agona Lutolli, Ph.D.

AUTHOR

Agona Lutolli, Ph.D.

SRCD State Policy Fellow

2025-2026 Cohort

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

A: At the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF), I work within the Division of Safety and Permanence (DSP), supporting work across Family Foundations Home Visiting (FFHV) and Child Welfare Research and Analytics (CWRA). My role includes conducting research and data analyses, translating findings for non-academic audiences, and supporting technical assistance efforts. Through these different roles, I help connect research findings with programs and policy work that support children and families.

Q: What interested you in becoming an SRCD Policy Fellow?

A: Much of my research in graduate school focused on parenting, and I often discussed programs like home visiting in the implications of my work. I became interested in the SRCD Policy Fellowship because I wanted to better understand how those programs operate in practice and how research informs program and policy decisions. The fellowship offered an opportunity to move beyond writing about these connections and experience them firsthand.

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

A: One of my most memorable projects was helping develop a Tribal Home Visiting Toolkit. I valued the collaboration among FFHV state team members, Tribal partners, and the Professional Development Network, which trains home visiting professionals in Wisconsin and hosts the toolkit on its website. Tribal partners shared what would be most useful for their communities, and I researched, gathered, and organized resources around those priorities, including materials developed by Tribal programs themselves. I am excited to see the toolkit continue to evolve.

Q: What words of wisdom might you pass to someone who is interested in SRCD's fellowship program?

A: My advice would be to embrace being uncomfortable. You may not always be the expert in the room, and that is often where the most growth happens. Say yes to opportunities that stretch your skills or take you outside your usual area. You may be surprised by what you enjoy and where those experiences lead.

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

A: One of my favorite professional development opportunities was earning the Tableau Business Intelligence Analyst certification. Learning Tableau gave me a practical skill for visualizing and communicating data in policy and other non-academic settings, where findings often need to be quickly understood by audiences with different levels of research expertise.

Q: Where are you from?

A: I was born in Kosovo and came to the United States with my family as refugees when I was five. I grew up in Chicago and now live in Wisconsin, so I consider both Kosovo and the Midwest home.
