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# February 2017 Spotlight on the SRCD Policy Fellow: Jameela Conway-Turner, Ph.D.

2016-2017 Federal Executive Branch Policy Fellow

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When I decided to pursue my PhD in Developmental Psychology, my overall goal was to learn how research could be used to influence policies and programs for youth. With that goal in mind, I developed a passion for synthesizing and communicating research to scientists, policymakers, and practitioners. As an SRCD Policy Fellow at the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) at the Department of Justice (DOJ), I cannot imagine a better place to refine these skills.

NIJ is the research, development, and evaluation arm of the DOJ, and is committed to using science to advance the knowledge and understanding of issues related to crime and justice. I work in the Office of Research and Evaluation in the Crime and Crime Prevention Research Division where I focus on school safety issues. I primarily work on the congressionally mandated Comprehensive School Safety Initiative (CSSI). It began in 2014 in response to the shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School. The intention of the CSSI is to build research and knowledge around school safety and provide evidence to support quality practices and

programs that schools can implement to increase school safety. Since 2014, NIJ has invested around $200 million to support this type of research. This project provides a great opportunity to understand the intersection between research, policy, and practice. I specifically came to NIJ to gain skills in effectively disseminating research to the public, and CSSI projects allow me to work towards this goal.

I am currently working on two projects that require both knowledge of school safety research and the ability to communicate to wide audiences. First, I am currently writing a research summary that highlights visible school safety measures (e.g., metal detectors, law enforcement) and their effectiveness in reducing crime and violence as well as identifying potential unintended consequences of their use. This research in brief will serve as a tool to help schools understand visible safety measures and make informed decisions about using these measures. The other project is developing a comprehensive school safety framework. This is a research informed document that explains important prevention and intervention strategies, policies, and practices that increase school safety. This framework will help guide school administrators, and those wishing to increase school safety, in shaping the safety decisions they make within their schools.

This work is both exciting and challenging. It requires that I think like a researcher, evaluating and synthesizing what we know about a particular field, and thinking about the best possible way to represent the information to practitioners who are working within the schools every day. Though challenging, I learn new things and think differently constantly. I am fortunate to be surrounded by a talented research team that is willing to help me learn and grow. I love the work that I am doing, and I have the unique opportunity to have the support of other SRCD and AAAS fellows who are also placed at NIJ. Working with the other fellows and the social science analysts in our office make coming to work each day exciting, and I’m looking forward to seeing how the rest of my first year turns out!