NEWS | POSTED JUNE 1, 2014

June 2014 Spotlight on the SRCD Policy Fellow: Kathleen McCoy, Ph.D.

2013-2014 Federal Executive Branch Policy Fellow

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I have said many times before: I have always wanted to be an SRCD fellow. True story! When I heard about it as a first year graduate school student, I said to myself, “I want to do that!” But to be honest, I never thought I actually would become one. You can imagine my excitement when I found out I received the fellowship. Yet, when friends or family asked me what I was going to be doing, I had the hardest time articulating my response, because I really had no idea. Now, as I near the end of my second year as a fellow in the Office for Planning Research and Evaluation (OPRE), which is housed within the Administration for Children and Families, I feel glad that I can finally articulate what I do and why I am proud to be an SRCD fellow.

One of the greatest things I enjoy about this fellowship is the opportunity to study a range of topics. In graduate school, I was used to concentrating on one area of research. Now, I enjoy the opposite! For instance, my morning may be focused on issues related to teen pregnancy prevention, while the afternoon focuses on child welfare issues. Having a diverse portfolio provides me with a great deal of variety in my

days, as well as allows me to test out different areas of research that I may be interested in but never had exposure to.

Although I enjoy all of the projects I work on, one piece of my portfolio that I am particularly excited about is program dissemination. In graduate school, I worked on interventions related to improving child and family outcomes. I was involved in a variety ways, ranging from creating and designing the intervention to administering the program to training other staff. The piece I didn't have exposure to was: what happens after the intervention is completed? How do you sustain a promising intervention? Many interventions find promising results, but they are not disseminated on a large scale basis. Part of my current portfolio is to work on this exact issue, with the goal of helping program developers understand how to scale up an intervention. I love this line of work!

Because my fellowship requires me to work in a variety of different areas, I get the opportunity to interact with a variety of experts. I find this experience rewarding and fascinating. I have thoroughly enjoyed attending congressional briefings and hearings. I am also fortunate, though, to be able to attend expert meetings held at non-governmental organizations, such as the Institute of Medicine, for instance. All of these meetings have allowed me to increase my knowledge, but also to network and interact with some amazing people.

Being an SRCD fellow truly has been an amazing experience that I feel incredibly fortunate to have had. OPRE is one of the best places I have ever worked with some great, intelligent, kind people! This fellowship has surpassed my expectations and was one of the best decisions.