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# February 2012 Spotlight on the SRCD Policy Fellow: Tisha Wiley, Ph.D.

2011-2012 Federal Executive Branch Policy Fellow

AUTHOR

Tisha Wiley, Ph.D.

I am a second year fellow placed in the Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (OBSSR), which is situated within the Office of the Director at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). OBSSR was established in 1995 and its mission is to advance the scientific understanding of the role of behavioral and social factors in illness and health. OBSSR is responsible for integrating behavioral and social sciences research across the 27 NIH Institutes and Centers using a variety of tools, including funding initiatives, training opportunities, conferences, workshops, and lectures.

The breadth of OBSSR's mission provided me with opportunities to interact with people from across the NIH as well as at government agencies outside of the NIH. The last year and a half at OBSSR have been an exhilarating experience and an incredible learning opportunity. I am trained as a social psychologist, though my research before coming to the fellowship focused and the long-term effects of child abuse and neglect on children and how such children interact with legal and social service systems. I have brought a

developmental and social psychological perspective to my office and had numerous opportunities to work on projects and serve on committees that are directly relevant to my expertise. However, one of the most interesting aspects of my placement is that I have stepped outside (often far outside) of my comfort zone and learned about issues and research that I had limited (if any) knowledge of before coming to OBSSR. I have also had opportunities to explore areas of longstanding interest and to create momentum around new initiatives. For example, one exciting project I have worked on is a workshop intended to bridge efforts in the computer science field to visualize complex data effectively with efforts by behavioral and social scientists struggling to make sense of complex and extremely large data sets. I planned a 1-day workshop that brought together people from various federal agencies, computer scientists, behavioral and social scientists, and software developers. The meeting was a great success and I look forward to working on future activities to push this effort forward, with the hope that this will benefit many areas of science, including developmental science.

In addition to my activities around data visualization, I have been involved in many other activities and projects. These activities included: drafting funding announcements, organizing various workshops, planning a summer training institute with colleagues at the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), representing my office on trans-governmental committees, attending congressional briefings, planning activities for the 2012 National Science and Engineering Festival, responding to congressional inquiries about controversial NIH-funded research, and acting as a planning committee member on a research project lead by the National Institutes of Justice addressing teen dating violence. OBSSR is a unique and exciting place within NIH that has afforded me many opportunities to learn new things and interact with a wide variety of people and I have enjoyed my time at OBSSR immensely.

In addition to what I've learned through my work at OBSSR, I've also had access an impressive array of mentors and professional development activities. My time as an SRCD fellow has provided me with many opportunities to meet scientific and policy leaders and to come to understand (or at least begin to understand) the complexity of the public policy world. I anticipate transitioning into a position as a Project Officer at the National Institute on Drug Abuse, where I will manage a portfolio of grants and contracts relevant to the delivery of effective drug abuse treatment services to adults and juveniles involved in the criminal justice system. I am excited to take on this new role and to continue to work at the intersection of science and policy. I am deeply grateful to SRCD for providing me this amazing experience.