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December 2008 Spotlight on the SRCD Policy Fellow: Kathleen Dwyer, Ph.D.

2007-2008 Federal Executive Branch Policy Fellow

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I am now in my second fellowship year at the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPRE) within the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), and I cannot believe what a difference a year has made. During my first fellowship year, I gained experience in the development of grants, contracts, and cooperative agreements; writing grant announcements and statements of work; and grant and contract proposal review. I also began to build knowledge bases in the areas of child care policies and subsidy strategies, issues related to early childhood and child care research, and intervention design and analysis. It is truly amazing how much I have learned in such a short time.

In my second year, I am building on all that I learned in my initial year and gaining additional experiences in project administration/management. I am the lead on two grant programs and one contract, as well as one of the leads on another contract. In terms of grants, I am the primary Federal contact for the *Child Care Research Scholars Grants*, which support dissertation research on child care policy issues, and for the *Child*

Care State Research Capacity Cooperative Agreements, which support States' efforts to build their child care research capacity. I am also responsible for the *CCDF Policies Database*, a five-year contract to create a comprehensive, up-to-date database of child care subsidy policies for all 50 States, the District of Columbia, and U.S. Territories, and from the information in this database, to create books of tables and analytic files that will be accessible and useable by researchers and other analysts. Among other projects, presentations, and meetings related to child care quality, I also play a primary role in *Assessing States' Child Care Quality Rating Systems (QRS)*, a 30-month contract to assess the child care quality rating systems States and localities have put in place to assess the quality of care delivered by individual child care providers and communicate this information to the consumers of care. In addition, I have recently taken the lead on writing the research chapter for the *Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Report to Congress for FY 2006 and FY 2007*, enumerating and describing all of the research activities that were funded during that time, as well as summarizing some of the emerging findings from research funded by ACF and other agencies that examine issues related to child care policy. Furthermore, I continue to hone my skills in areas such as communicating with policy and practice audiences and working in interagency workgroups, and the opportunities for networking remain remarkable. The remainder of this year should be exciting and challenging for me.

Finally, the SRCD Policy Fellowship has given me an unparalleled opportunity to learn about the interface of science and policy. Throughout the year, I have not only gained experience with new processes, acquired knowledge, and honed my skills, but I have done all this while also thinking about – and observing – the role that science plays in the legislative process and the role that policy plays in science.