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January 2008 Spotlight on the SRCD Policy Fellow: Glenetta Hudson Harris, Ph.D.

2007-2008 Federal Executive Branch Policy Fellow

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I am currently a first year SRCD Executive Branch fellow with a joint appointment at the Office of Head Start (OHS) and the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPRE) within the Administration for Children and Families. My brief time (five months) as a fellow has resulted in the most remarkable experience I could have ever imagined. As a fellow in two federal offices, I have been able to gain experiences that span multiple domains.

OHS is a program office that administers grants to agencies that provide comprehensive child development services for low-income families through Head Start and Early Head Start Programs. At OHS, I have been able to transform research findings to practice in many ways. For example, I am involved in composing and managing the Head Start Research To Practice Tip Sheets. The purpose of the Tip Sheets is to serve as a way to make ACF-funded Head Start research accessible to programs by highlighting findings and identifying implications of the research. At OHS, I also participate in WorkZones such as the Research to Practice

WorkZone and the Mental Health WorkZone. These WorkZones provide an avenue through which practitioners, regional program managers, the TA network, federal staff, OHS staff and OPRE staff discuss various topics of interest. Participating in these WorkZones are yet another example of how I am actively engaged in the process of integrating research into practice.

OPRE is a research office that advises the Assistant Secretary for Children and Families on ways to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of programs in order to enhance the economic and social well-being of children and families. OPRE is involved in research and policy analysis in addition to providing guidance on performance measurement, research and evaluation methods and dissemination of research findings. At OPRE, I have been able to assist in many projects such as the Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Survey Design, a study that will examine migrant and seasonal families and how they are being served by Head Start programs. Another project I've been involved in has included helping with the grant review process for the Head Start University Partnership: Strategies for Developing Head Start Teacher Effectiveness. The grants were designed to provide funding for research to identify strategies or interventions that develop and sustain Head Start teacher behaviors that may improve child outcome. As a liaison between OPRE and OHS, I have played a role in helping to disseminate the Head Start research from OPRE to Head Start Programs. This role includes leading team meetings involving federal staff from both offices to discuss and provide updates on the latest program initiatives and research projects. I am also the primary person who facilitates a "Research Corner" wherein federal staff from OPRE discuss the latest research findings on Head Start programs.

As a liaison, I have also been able to coordinate and participate in briefings on a wide array of research topics including American Indian American Native Head Start, children's socioemotional wellbeing, early math curriculum and early health and nutrition. Currently, OHS and OPRE are working on writing reports in response to the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act that reauthorizes Head Start. I am part of a subcommittee that has the extraordinary task of amending the Head Start regulations pertaining to education assessments so as to reflect the new policies that have been set in place through the Act.

My expectations for the fellowship year include learning how policies are developed and implemented, along with learning the most effective ways to use psychological research as a tool to inform policy development. During my short tenure, I have gained invaluable experience about the complexities of integrating research, practice and policy. All in all, I cherish the role I have had as a psychologist to provide a voice for research within the political arena.