NEWS | POSTED MARCH 28, 2018

Policy Update: March 2018

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SRCD News Related to Child and Family Policy

Register Now: Upcoming Webinar on Bridging Research and Policy

Title: Bridging Research and Policy: Insights from American Association for the Advancement of Science Congressional Fellows

Date: Monday, April 9

Time: 11:00 am-12:00 pm Eastern

Description: The focus of this webinar will be on bridging research and policy at the federal level through the eyes of doctoral fellows who were staffers in Congress in 2017. Graduate students, faculty, and professionals who are interested in engaging with federal policymakers and who would like to make their work more policy-relevant are all encouraged to attend.

Specific topics that will be addressed include the following:

- Tips for successfully engaging with policymakers and their staff;
- The points and products throughout the legislative process during which research is used;
- The challenges of incorporating research into policy; and
- The differences between working with the House and Senate.

This webinar will include presentations by the following former AAAS Congressional Fellows:
- Elizabeth Day, Ph.D., Postdoctoral Fellow, Bronfenbrenner Center for Translational Research, Cornell University
- Emily M. Douglas, Ph.D., Professor and Head of Department of Social Science & Policy Studies, Worcester Polytechnic Institute
- Rashmi Nair, Ph.D., Internationalization Committee Member, Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues
- Catherine Paolucci, Ed.D., Associate Professor of Mathematics Education, SUNY New Paltz; AAAS Science and Technology Policy Fellow, National Science Foundation

Click here to register for this webinar

Spotlight on the SRCD Policy Fellow
Kelly Jedd McKenzie, Ph.D., is an Executive Branch Fellow whose placement is in the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Click here to learn more about her work, including collaborating with a variety of federal agencies to advance research and practice in the area of trauma-informed care.

Legislative Branch Updates

FY18 Appropriations Update: Omnibus Expected Soon
The federal government is currently funded through midnight on March 23. Both the House and Senate have spent the last few weeks working on a massive omnibus spending bill for fiscal year 2018, however, at the time of publication neither house had yet voted on the $1.3 trillion spending bill. While officials in both houses and on both sides of the aisle have made it clear they would like to pass the omnibus before funding expires on March 23, it is possible that another short-term continuing resolution will be required to avoid a government shutdown. Full coverage of the FY18 omnibus will be available in the April edition of Policy

Update.

Congressional Briefing on Educating Underprepared College Students

On February 26, SRCD co-sponsored a congressional briefing as part of the Friends of the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) entitled "Advances in Educating Underprepared College Students: Knowledge, Policy, and Practice." The briefing focused on IES-funded research that is helping determine and refine best practices to support students entering community college and ways that IES research can help advance developmental/remedial coursework at community colleges. Speakers discussed a range of research on helping college students succeed in developmental education courses. Some specific topics addressed included the importance of looking at high school GPA rather than just standardized test scores when determining if a student should be placed in college level or developmental courses, since high school grades are cumulative measures and have more explanatory power than a single test score; and the frequent misplacement of students in the wrong course level when initially assessed (with studies showing that both under-placement and over-placement are very common). Panelists discussed examples of specific models that have shown positive results, such as Dana Center Mathematics Pathways (DCMP), and a long-term research-practice partnership in Oregon that has helped initiate campus-level changes at community colleges and helped community colleges strengthen their connections with high schools. The speakers also noted that IES grants require a stronger connection to practitioners than many other agencies or grantmaking entities, which ensures that researchers are aware of practitioners' research needs. Speakers included: Thomas Bailey, Ph.D., Director, Community College Research Center, Teachers College, Columbia University; Michelle Hodara, Ph.D., Senior Researcher, Education Northwest; Scott Ralls, Ph.D., President, Northern Virginia Community College, and Joanna Gorin, Ph.D., Vice President of Research, ETS (moderator). Additional information and slides from the briefing are available here.

Senate Subcommittee Hearing on Child Abuse and Domestic Violence in the Military

On March 8, the Personnel Subcommittee of the Senate Committee on Armed Services held a hearing entitled "Domestic Violence and Child Abuse in the Military." Subcommittee Chairman Thom Tillis (R-NC) noted in his opening statement that the subcommittee would provide the Department of Defense (DoD) with additional resources to strengthen prevention and victim support for those who have experienced domestic violence and child abuse. Subcommittee Ranking Member Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) added that the military lacks prevalence surveys to understand the scope of the problem, and that many times child abuse and

domestic violence are still characterized as “family issues” to be dealt with in private. She noted specific challenges in addressing the unique stressors faced by military families, including deployment and reintegration, isolation from support networks, and fear of reporting due to the impact on the career of the abuser.

Two witness panels provided personal and expert testimony on the issue, with the first consisting of domestic abuse survivors and advocates. The testimonies focused on the lack of seriousness sometimes accorded to reports of domestic violence due to high rank of the suspected abusers; the complicated system in which justice may be delayed or denied due to lack of coordination between civilian and military courts; and a lack of dedicated resources for individuals who come forward with complaints. Suggestions for improvement included facilitation of communication across military and civilian courts at all levels; training in trauma informed survivor communication for those receiving reports; better collaboration with outside resources for victims; and dedicated legal services for victims on military bases. The second panel consisted of experts and government witnesses. Testimony focused on how PTSD and trauma can put armed services members at risk for engaging in domestic violence; the lack of health outcome data for survivors of domestic abuse, such as that provided by traumatic brain injury screens; the need for medical care and child counseling to be provided along with protective orders; a recommendation to create trauma informed support groups for members of the military, with the DoD implementing evidence-based programs shown to be effective in preventing and stopping domestic violence; evidence showing that early home visiting can be effective in preventing child abuse, with the infant abuse rate in Durham, North Carolina declining 67 percent after implementation of theFamily Connects program; the upcoming expansion of Family Connects to two military communities; and an introduction to the DoD’s current coordinated community response approach to domestic violence, described in detail in the written testimony.

Witnesses included Adrian Perry; Merci McKinley; Iris Vega, Domestic Violence Court Advocate, Doorways for Women and Families; Stephanie Barna, Senior Policy Advisor, Under Secretary of Defense, Personnel and Readiness; Dr. Casey T. Taft, Professor of Psychiatry, Boston University School of Medicine; Dr. Jacquelyn C. Campbell, RN, FAAN, Professor, Anna D. Wolf Chair, Johns Hopkins School of Nursing; and Dr. Kenneth A. Dodge, Professor, Sanford School of Public Policy, Duke University. Click here to watch the full hearing and read witness testimony.

House Appropriations Subcommittee Hearing on the FY19 Health and Human Services Budget

On March 15, the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee hosted a hearing entitled "FY19 Budget Hearing - Department of Health and Human Services." Subcommittee Chairman Tom Cole (R-OK) opened the hearing by introducing the purpose: to hear from HHS Secretary Alex Azar on the President's Budget for FY19 and the unique challenges faced by the agency, such as funding Indian health services and combating the opioid epidemic. Subcommittee Ranking Member Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) added that she was concerned about many of the proposed cuts in the budget, including the elimination of the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) and Preschool Development Grants. She questioned the logic of providing $10 billion dollars to fight the opioid epidemic while proposing a $219 million cut to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAHMSA), and cuts to the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Additionally, she noted that the benefit of the increase to the Child Care Development Block Grant would be mitigated by the proposed cuts to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and elimination of the Social Services Block Grant. Full Committee Chairman Rodney Frelinghuysen (D-NJ) and Ranking Member Nita Lowey (D-NY) also provided statements, mostly focusing on concerns over the proposed cuts, especially cuts to NIH, with representative Lowey stating "There has always been bipartisan support. This is clear. This is simple…Cuts to the NIH or even level funding is not an option."

HHS Secretary Alex Azar provided testimony, explaining that the budget proposal is based on an administration initiative, *ReImagine HHS*, which seeks to improve "efficiency, quality, and cost-effectiveness" within the agency. He noted that the budget provides $10 billion to HHS to combat the opioid epidemic by improving access to prevention and treatment, increasing availability and distribution of overdose reducing drugs, improving data and reporting, supporting research, and finding alternatives for pain management. The proposed budget also includes funding for treatment for serious mental illness, through fully funding a new Assertive Community Treatment for Individuals with Serious Mental Illness program. Mr. Azar also addressed NIH funding, noting that alongside the lower funding level, the administration is proposing public-private partnerships, administrative reforms, and better coordination and planning through bringing three other HHS research institutes into NIH. He added that the budget focuses on employment as a goal of anti-poverty programs, for example, by strengthening work requirements in TANF and establishing Welfare to Work Programs. The secretary ended his statement by calling attention to the proposed investments in Indian Health Service (IHS) facilities to make sure they meet quality health standards. Click here for a webcast of the hearing and to read witness testimony.

Executive Branch Updates

NSF Releases 2018-2022 Strategic Plan

The National Science Foundation (NSF) recently released its latest five-year strategic plan, Building the Future: Investing in Discovery and Innovation. The plan outlines NSF's three strategic goals for fiscal years 2018-2022:

- Expand knowledge in science, engineering, and learning
- Advance the capability of the Nation to meet current and future challenges
- Enhance NSF's performance of its mission.

The strategic plan also includes a vision for sustaining research and innovation at NSF, examples of new opportunities to expand upon research and push science further, and examples of important discoveries that NSF-funded researchers have made and the impacts that these discoveries have had on the economy and health and well-being of the country.

Federal Reports and Requests

Reports

New Reports and Briefs from the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation

Several new publications are available from the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPRE), Administration for Children and Families (ACF), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services:

(1) Instituto del Progreso Latino's Carreras en Salud Program: Implementation and Early Impact Report This report documents the implementation and early impacts of the Carreras en Salud (Careers in Health) program, operated by Instituto del Progreso Latino, in Chicago, Illinois.

(2) Market Rate Surveys and Alternative Methods of Data Collection and Analysis to Inform Subsidy Payment Rates This brief provides information on whether to conduct a market rate survey or use alternative methodology to collect information on child care prices and inform child care subsidy payment rates.

(3) Child Care Subsidies under the CCDF Program: An Overview of Policy Differences across States and Territories as of October 1, 2016 This brief summarizes Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) policy

differences across states/territories.

(4) Building Strong Evidence in Challenging Contexts: Alternatives to Traditional Randomized Controlled Trials This brief summarizes key themes from an OPRE meeting on alternatives to traditional randomized control trials.

(5) Evidence and Equity: Challenges for Research Design This brief discusses disparities in the research on ethnic, cultural and racial minority communities, their implications, and how they can be addressed.

(6) A National Portrait of Head Start Children and Families: FACES 2014 This brief uses data from the Head Start FACES 2014 study to describe the characteristics, well-being, and development of children and families at the beginning of the Head Start program year.

(7) A Portrait of Head Start Classrooms and Programs in Spring 2015: FACES 2014-2015 Data Tables and Study Design This report presents data tables and statistics from the Head Start FACES 2014 study to look at characteristics of Head Start classrooms, teachers, centers and programs.

(8) A Spotlight on Dual Language Learners in Head Start: FACES 2014 This brief uses data from the Head Start FACES 2014 study to describe characteristics of children who are dual language learners in Head Start.

*(9) Building Family Partnerships: Family Engagement Findings from the Head Start FACES Study*This report provides information on family engagement efforts and service provisions in Head Start programs.

(10) Child and Family Outcomes During the Head Start Year: FACES 2014-2015 Data Tables and Study Design This report presents data tables and statistics from the Head Start FACES 2014 study to describe demographic backgrounds and developmental outcomes of children enrolled in Head Start from fall 2014 to spring 2015.

(11) Descriptive Data on Head Start Children and Families from FACES 2014: Fall 2014 Data Tables and Study Design This report presents data tables and statistics from the Head Start FACES 2014 study to describe demographic backgrounds and developmental outcomes of children enrolled in head start in fall 2014.

New Reports from the Institute of Education Sciences

Several new reports are available from the National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education

Sciences (IES), Department of Education:

(1) The History and Origins of Survey Items for the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) (2016–17 Update) This report provides an inventory of the IPEDS data items and survey components, discussing their legislative origins and requirements, and providing updates.

(2) Trends in High School Dropout and Completion Rates in the United States: 2014 This reportpresents statistics on high school dropout and completion rates in 2014.

(3) Digest of Education Statistics, 2016 This publication provides a compilation of statistics related to education from pre-k through graduate school on a variety of topics.

Federal Funding Opportunities

This month's FFO highlights a National Institute of Justice opportunity to fund rigorous research to produce practical knowledge that can improve the safety of students and schools. The Comprehensive School Safety Initiative (CSSI) is carried out through partnerships between researchers, educators, and other stakeholders; including law enforcement, behavioral and mental health professionals, courts, and other justice system professionals. Projects funded under the CSSI are designed to improve understanding that can be applied to schools and school districts across the nation for years to come. This solicitation includes five funding categories with different expectations and requirements to accomplish the purposes of the CSSI. Completed applications are due by May 7, 2018. Click here to read about this and other funding opportunities.