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Policy Update: December 2017

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SRCD News Related to Child and Family Policy

SRCD Federal Policy Fellowship: Last Call for Applications

Applications for the 2018-2019 SRCD Federal Policy Fellowship are due this **Friday, December 15**. Click here to apply.

SRCD Pre-doctoral and Post-doctoral State Policy Fellowships: Call for Letters of Intent

Policy decisions focusing on children and families take place at the state level as well as at the federal level. To extend its longstanding post-doctoral fellowship program focusing on federal child and family policy, SRCD is seeking letters of intent for two State Policy Fellowship Programs for the 2018-2019 academic year: the Pre-doctoral State Policy Fellowship in Early Learning, funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Post-doctoral State Policy Fellowship in Early Childhood, funded by the Heising-Simons Foundation.

The goal of these programs is to provide participants at different levels of study and career development with firsthand experience in state policymaking, program implementation, and evaluation, while also providing state executive branch agencies greater access to child development research expertise. Academic mentors for those participating in both the pre- and post-doctoral programs are expected to have backgrounds relevant to, and interest in extending, their research on state early childhood policies and programs. More information about the State Policy Fellowships is available online at https://www.srcd.org/professional-advancement/srcd-us-policy-fellowship-programs/state. For questions, please email policyfellowships@srcd.org or call 202-800-0666.

Letters of Intent are to be submitted to policyfellowships@srcd.org by **December 22, 2017**. A Selection Committee will invite full applications from a subset.

SRCD Signs Letter in Support of Preserving Tax Benefits for Students

SRCD recently signed on to a multi-society letter coordinated by the American Association for the Advancement of Science to House Speaker Paul Ryan (R-WI) and House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) urging the House of Representatives to preserve important tax benefit provisions for students, such as the student loan interest deduction and graduate student tuition waivers. To see this and other recent letters that SRCD has signed on to, please visit the sign on letter page of the SRCD website.

Spotlight on the SRCD Policy Fellow

Jenessa Malin, Ph.D., is a second year Executive Branch Fellow whose placement is in the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE) in the Administration for Children and Families. Click here to learn more about her work, including her experience co-leading the Child Maltreatment Incidence Data Linkages (CMI Data Linkages) project.

Legislative Branch Updates

Tax Legislation Passes House and Senate: Relevance to Children and Families

On December 2, the Senate passed a sweeping tax overhaul on a vote of 51-49. The House had previously passed its own version of the bill on November 16, with a vote of 227-205. The two chambers are now resolving differences between the two bills. Provisions included in the House and Senate versions of H.R. 1, the "Tax Cuts and Jobs Act" that are relevant to SRCD members include:

- *Repeals Higher Education Related Tax Credits.* The House bill includes a provision to repeal the income exclusion for graduate tuition waivers, requiring graduate students to pay taxes on the full amount of their tuition waiver. The House bill also repeals the student loan interest deduction and several other tax credits for students. Both the House and Senate bills include excise taxes on private university endowments. A detailed summary of the higher education related provisions is available from Inside Higher Ed.
- *Repeals the Affordable Care Act's Individual Mandate.* The Senate bill repeals the penalty for individuals who opt out of purchasing insurance. Estimates from the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) indicate repealing the individual mandate will result in increases to insurance premiums and 13 million fewer people with coverage within ten years. This, along with the continued lapse in CHIP funding, could lead to decreasing coverage levels for children and their families. This brief and a recent Pediatrics study illustrate why parent coverage matters for children.
- *Increases the Child Tax Credit.* The House bill raises the maximum Child Tax Credit (CTC) to $1,600 per child (up from $1,000 per child), while the Senate bill raises it to $2,000. However, the credit is structured such that most low-income working families would not receive the full benefit or any benefit of the increased CTC. The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities reports that 10 million children with parents who work low-wage jobs would receive only a "token" benefit of $75 or less from the increased CTC.
- *Increases the Deficit by at Least 1 Trillion Dollars, Which Will Spur Program Cuts*. The tax overhaul is estimated to increase the deficit by at least 1 trillion dollars. Congressional leadership has indicated that cutting the deficit will be a top priority for 2018, with a central focus on social safety net programs like Medicaid, Medicare, and SNAP (formerly known as food stamps). Under PAYGO, a budget rule requiring that tax cuts be covered by tax increases or cuts in mandatory spending, hundreds of federal programs could be cut partially or entirely in the next year. Social Security and some other means-tested programs are exempt from these cuts, and a cut to Medicare is capped at 4 percent. However,

many other mandatory programs would be subject to a full cut. This *New York Times* article outlines all 228 programs or accounts that would lose their funding under PAYGO cuts. If Congress passes legislation to waive PAYGO before the end of 2017, these automatic cuts will not take place. As of publication, such legislation has not yet been introduced, but might be before the end of the year.

FY18 Appropriations Update: President Signs Continuing Resolution Through December 22

On December 8 the president signed H.J.Res. 123, a continuing resolution (CR) to fund the government through December 22. The House and Senate had previously passed the two-week stopgap spending bill on December 7, narrowly avoiding a partial government shutdown, as the previous CR was set to expire on December 8. The CR also includes a temporary technical fix to the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) to provide redistribution of funds in "emergency shortfall states" through the end of 2017. Please see the October 2017 edition of Policy Update for additional details on pending CHIP legislation. Since the current CR expires on December 22, Congress will likely have to pass another short term CR to fund the government through the end of the year.

Forum Celebrating 150 Years of the National Center for Education Statistics

On November 15, the American Educational Research Association, American Statistical Association, and Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics hosted a discussion forum on Capitol Hill celebrating the 150th anniversary of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) entitled "Commemorating 150 Years of Innovation--And Exploring Future Opportunities." SRCD served as a cosponsor for this event. A variety of education stakeholders spoke about the importance of federal statistical agencies broadly and in particular the vital role of NCES in their work. Topics discussed included: the importance of NCES longitudinal studies in studying children's development; the role NCES could play in the emerging field of data science; the importance of data privacy; what we have learned from NCES data that would not have been possible otherwise, with examples ranging from the growth in the number of homeless students to the gender gap in higher education; and the need to find a balance between designed data collection and other pre-existing data sources, such as administrative data. Speakers included: Felice Levine, Executive Director, American Educational Research Association; Representative Paul Mitchell (R-MI); Peggy Carr, Acting Commissioner, National Center for Education Statistics; Jack Buckley, Senior Vice President, American Institutes for Research and Former Commissioner of NCES; Larry Hedges, Professor of Statistics and Education and Social Policy, Northwestern University and Chair of the National Board for Education Sciences; and Bridget Terry Long, Professor of Education and Economics at the Harvard Graduate

School of Education and Former Chair of the National Board for Education Sciences. A webcast of the event is available here, and a longer summary of the forum and the reception that followed is available here.

Senate Committee Hearing on Simplification of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid

On November 28, the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) held a hearing entitled "Reauthorizing the Higher Education Act: Examining Proposals to Simplify the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)." Chairman Lamar Alexander (R-TN) opened the hearing by drawing attention to a hearing held by the HELP committee 4 years ago that concluded that most of the 108 questions on the FAFSA were unnecessary. He called for simplification of the FAFSA as part of the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA), noting that the application's complexity is students' biggest impediment to taking advantage of Tennessee Promise, a program that provides two years of free education in Tennessee. Ranking Member Patty Murray (D-WA) added to the Chairman's statement noting that "while it's clear simplifying FAFSA would help students, it alone cannot solve the challenges that families across the country face in addressing and affording higher education." She called for a full reauthorization of the HEA to address the rising costs of college, accountability of institutions of higher education, barriers for working families, students of color, and first generation students to attend college, and ongoing threats to learning in a safe environment. She concluded by saying that she hoped to have more hearings on the reauthorization and to work together with the committee and stakeholders to solve both big and small issues in higher education.

Witnesses spoke on a variety of issues related to the simplification of FAFSA, including: the challenge of creating an application that is as simple as possible but also allows the government to determine eligibility accurately; that simplification matters because gaps in enrollment rates for high- and low-income students are widening; that most of the financial information on the FAFSA is not necessary to accurately estimate Pell Grant eligibility; new technology being used that imports tax data directly into the FAFSA; a proposal for using federal means tested benefits such as SNAP and SSI to determine FAFSA eligibility, reducing the burden of verification on students; summarizing Pell Grant eligibility information on a postcard that can be distributed in schools and other organizations; and personal stories of the immense difficulties of filling out the FAFSA for unaccompanied homeless youth who do not have access to family finance information. Witnesses included: Justin Draeger, President, National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators; Dr. Nancy McCallin, President, Colorado Community College System; Dr. Kim Rueben, Senior Fellow, Urban-Brookings Tax Policy Center at the Urban Institute; Dr. Judith Scott-Clayton, Associate Professor of Economics and Education, Teachers College, Columbia University; and Elaine Williams, Shelter Diversion

Specialist, YWCA of Richmond. Click here to watch the hearing and read witness testimony.

Senate Committee Hearing on Implementing the 21st Century Cures Act

On December 7, the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) hosted a hearing entitled "Implementation of the 21st Century Cures Act: Progress and the Path Forward for Medical Innovation." Chairman Lamar Alexander (R-TN) opened the hearing by stating the importance of following up with federal agencies to ensure proper implementation and progress on advances in medical research. He underscored the value of the legislation, asserting "it's not an overstatement to say that the Cures Act has the potential to affect virtually every American family by taking advantage of breathtaking advances in biomedical research." Ranking Member Patty Murray (D-WA) further drew attention to provisions of the legislation, including expanded care for mental illness and substance use disorders, strengthened coordination and crisis intervention, and inclusion of underrepresented groups in clinical trials. She added that she hoped to hear specifically from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) on what the agency is doing to further "science over extreme ideology" and from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) on "pushing back against administration's deregulatory approach," in the context of ensuring that medical devices are safe and effective.

NIH Director Dr. Francis Collins focused his testimony on how NIH is implementing provisions of the Cures Act. He discussed ways NIH is addressing the goal of including underrepresented groups in biomedical research, such as a workshop on inclusion across the lifespan and creation of the Task Force on Research Specific to Pregnant Women and Lactating Women (PRGLAC). Dr. Collins also spoke on efforts to increase the number of NIH-funded early and mid-career investigators through the Next Generation Researchers Initiative. Finally, Dr. Collins discussed the Cures Act's integral role in providing the Innovation Fund, which includes the All of Us research project, a national resource compiling health data from one of the largest and most diverse groups of volunteers across the country; the Brain Research through Advancing Innovative Neurotechnologies (BRAIN) Initiative, through which NIH has launched 110 new research projects to promote brain mapping and development of new neurotechnologies; the Cancer Moonshot, making 142 new awards aimed at advances in cancer prevention, diagnosis, treatment, and care; and the Regenerative Medicine Innovation Project, to support research on stem cells.

FDA Commissioner Dr. Scott Gottlieb then testified on how the FDA is implementing provisions of the Cures Act. He provided an update on initiatives underway by the agency, including the Comprehensive Policy

Framework for Regenerative Medicine, which will assist in the development of regenerative medicine therapies and designated expedited therapies. The FDA has also worked to implement the Cures Act's provisions on digital health, including clarifying when a digital product is subject to FDA regulation and when it isn't. The Cures Act also called for patient-focused drug development, which the agency has begun to address by including a "Patient Experience Data" section in drug reviews, as well as planning for a patient experience workshop on December 18, 2017. Click here to watch the hearing and read witness testimony.

U.S. Commission on Civil Rights Briefing on School Discipline Policies

On December 8, The United States Commission on Civil Rights (USCCR) hosted a briefing entitled "The School-to-Prison Pipeline: The Intersections of Students of Color with Disabilities." Commission Chair Catherine E. Lhamon gave introductory statements laying out the briefing's purpose: to investigate disparities in school discipline at the intersection of race and disability in order to make recommendations to the president, Congress, and the general public. Several other commissioners made remarks, including a statement by Commissioner Gail Heriot noting the tension between the issue of disruptive students, regardless of race, making learning difficult and even dangerous if left unaddressed in the classroom, and students being needlessly expelled. She criticized Obama-era federal policies, stating that such policies have overly bureaucratized school discipline and that they are neither effective nor popular.

A panel of education policy experts then spoke on federal education policy related to disparities in school discipline. Panelists discussed: schools' excessive use of exclusionary discipline including suspension for minor infractions leading to missed class time, declining classroom engagement, and long term consequences like drop out; a lack of evidence that schools with lower disciplinary rates are less safe and that harsher disciplinary policies are effective in reducing problems; disparities by race and ethnicity in the identification of education disabilities; the issue of the sexual abuse to prison pipeline for girls of color; initiatives by the former administration including issuing guidance and regulations, participation in public meetings, and data collection; the need for federal involvement in disciplinary policy to look beyond individual situations into systemic problems; discussion of an IDEA provision from the Obama administration which requires states to cite districts with disproportionate ethnic/racial differences in identification, placement, or discipline of children with disabilities; that the current Department of Education might delay implementation of this provision by two years or not implement it at all; and a dissenting discussion on how the statistics on this issue are misleading, and that prior federal guidance on the issue was mistaken.

A second panel of researchers, stakeholders, and experts also provided input. This discussion included: statistics from Massachusetts, where 60% of students with disabilities removed from school were removed for non-violent, non-criminal offenses; a range of alternatives for exclusionary discipline including restorative practice, social and emotional learning, and relationship building; a randomized control trial on teacher training focused on engagement that eliminated racial disparities in discipline and office referrals; that removing girls from school, especially girls with disabilities, makes them vulnerable to participation in underground economies; that professionals need to be trained in trauma informed practice as well as positive behavior intervention; an argument disputing the pattern of disparities in school discipline, stating that when studies controlled for different schools and past student behavior the disparities disappeared and that according to surveys, students feel discipline reform has made schools less safe; and a discussion questioning the view that minority children are being overly identified as having disabilities, stating that white children and English speaking children are consistently more likely to be identified as having disabilities. A webcast of the event is available here, and the full agenda and list of panelists and affiliations is available here.

Executive Branch Updates

NIH Behavioral and Social Sciences Research Festival

On December 8, the NIH Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (OBSSR) held a research festival, sharing updates on the contributions behavioral and social sciences research is making to understanding and supporting positive health outcomes. The full agenda for the festival is available here. The festival had three core components: (1) hearing from NIH leaders about the progress being made in understanding and intervening to improve health outcomes through behavioral and social sciences research; (2) providing an opportunity for "town hall" discussions with OBSSR leadership; and (3) hearing presentations on cutting edge research focusing on behavioral and social science issues relating to health by both intramural researchers at NIH as well as those with extramural NIH research funding. A theme of the presentations throughout the day was that important advances are being made through joint consideration of physiological and social and behavioral processes.

The event opened with remarks by Lawrence A. Tabak, Principal Deputy Director of NIH, who underscored the value of research considering social and behavioral contributions to health across NIH, for example, the importance of considering these factors both in understanding and addressing the opioid epidemic. William

Riley, NIH Associate Director for Behavioral and Social Sciences and Director of OBSSR, gave an overview of behavioral and social sciences research across NIH, noting a small increase in overall funding for projects with a behavioral and social science component at NIH between 2016 and 2017. He provided highlights of relevant NIH projects, such as a project being led by former SRCD President Greg Duncan involving a randomized control trial looking at effects of unconditioned cash payments for low income families on children's development. A presentation by Eliseo J. Pérez-Stable, Director of the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities, noted that minority health research at NIH focuses on health determinants that lead to disparities in health outcomes for minority and underserved groups. His presentation included discussion of how everyday experiences of discrimination are related to physiological measures such as measures of blood pressure and markers of inflammation, and how social and behavioral factors can contribute to disparities in such health outcomes as childhood obesity.

Parallel town halls were held providing opportunities for the NIH and broader research communities to engage in discussion with OBSSR leadership. At the town hall led by William Elwood for the broader research community, the questions that came up focused on such issues as the implications of the clinical trials policy at NIH for social and behavioral sciences researchers, and on assistance that project officers can provide to new investigators navigating the proposal submission process at NIH for the first time.

Finally, intramural and extramural researchers gave presentations on cutting edge research. For example, Eric Lenze of the University of Washington shared pilot data from a small scale randomized control trial (the basis for an evaluation now being conducted at larger scale), pointing to the potential of mindfulness approaches in limiting the progression of dementia among the elderly, identifying the role of specific physiological mechanisms in explaining the effects. Presentations focused on child and adolescent development included: Kelli Komro of Emory University discussing the development and effectiveness of culturally appropriate interventions to delay the onset of alcohol use among Native American and White high school students, and Jack Yanovski, Chief of the Intramural Section on Growth and Obesity at NICHD, examining linkages of depressive symptoms and insulin sensitivity in adolescent girls at risk of type 2 diabetes.

High School Graduation Rate Reaches New High

According to recently released statistics from the National Center for Education Statistics, the U.S. high school graduation rate reached a new all-time high of 84 percent for the high school class of 2015-2016,

improving upon the previous year's graduation rate of 83.2 percent. The data show increases in graduation rates for many groups of public high school students, including Black students, Hispanic students, students with disabilities, low income students, and English language learners.

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) Welfare Rules Databook: State TANF Policies as of July 2016 This annual report provides tables containing key Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) policies for each state as of July 2016.

(2) Improving Outcomes Among Employment Program Participants Through Goal Attainment: A Conceptual Framework This report provides a conceptual framework suggesting new approaches to improving economic self-sufficiency and well-being outcomes for low-income adults participating in employment programs.

(3) Identifying Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Human Services: A Conceptual Framework and Literature Review This report summarizes the research on racial and ethnic differences in six human services programs administered by ACF.

(4) Supporting the Use of Administrative Data in Early Care and Education Research: Resource Series This resource series is intended for state administrators and their research partners to utilize administrative data to address policy-relevant early care and education research questions.

(5) Behavioral Insights for Child Support: Lessons from the BIAS Project These briefs describe the problems, interventions implemented, and findings from tests of interventions in the four child support agencies participating in the Behavioral Interventions to Advance Self-Sufficiency (BIAS) project.

(6) Head Start Children's Developmental Progress and Kindergarten Experiences This briefdescribes

children's developmental progress from Head Start entry to the spring of kindergarten and follows up on their experiences during their kindergarten year.

*(7) Head Start Family and Classroom Supports for Kindergarten Outcomes: FACES 2009 Report*This report describes Head Start children's family and classroom environments that may support children's kindergarten achievement.

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

Several new publications are available from the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services:

(1) Patterns of Foster Care Placement and Family Reunification Following Child Maltreatment Investigations This brief examines characteristics of reunified children and families and re-reports of maltreatment following foster care placements after maltreatment investigations.

(2) Psychotropic Medication Use among Children Who Are Subjects of Child Protective Services Investigations: Does Court Oversight Matter? This brief examines the courts' role in overseeing psychotropic medication prescriptions for children who were subjects of child maltreatment investigations.

(3) Parental Incarceration and Children in Nonparental Care This brief examines characteristics of children who have lived with someone other than their parents and who had experienced the incarceration of a parent or guardian.

(4) Research to Address the Opioid Crisis: Approaches to Data Linkage This brief provides an overview of the data sources that could be leveraged to study the opioid crisis within each of the five HHS strategic areas.

Federal Funding Opportunities

This month's FFO highlights a National Institutes of Health funding opportunity to develop and test youth violence prevention interventions that incorporate racism/discrimination (R/D) prevention strategies for one or more health disparity populations. The target age range includes middle school to high school-aged youth, corresponding to an approximate age range of 11 to 18. Research under this initiative may involve examination of (a) the combination of existing violence prevention and R/D prevention interventions, (b) the addition of newly developed R/D prevention elements into existing violence prevention interventions, or (c)

the development of new, fully integrated violence and R/D prevention interventions. Applications are due by 5pm local time of applicant organization on May 25, 2018. Click here to read about this and other federal funding opportunities.