

Federal Agency Placements

See how decisions are made that can affect the scientific community's research agendas. Get involved in improving nation-wide childcare and social programs. Apply for a federal agency placement.

Placed within the Department for Health and Human Services in Washington, D.C., federal agency fellows learn how U.S. executive branch agencies make decisions on policies and programs authorized by Congress. Depending upon the type of office, fellows may learn how to write funding announcements, communicate research to agency staff and leadership, or work on regulations or policy initiatives.

SRCD has supported fellows across 7 administrations in our more than 30 years of operation. From Carter and Reagan to Biden and Trump, our fellows support evidence-based policy across governments.

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"I had so much time in my fellowship to explore and develop myself. I wish I could go back and do it again."

– Jameela Conway Turner, Federal Agency Fellow (2016-2018)



About the Federal Agency Placements

Federal agencies have the most variability of any placement. Fellows that are invited to come to Washington, D.C. to interview with SRCD will meet with prospective federal agencies to hear about their work. Then, after agencies and applicants have indicated their preferences, applicants may be invited to interview with multiple interested placement agencies and receive an offer to work with a specific agency. Most years, placements are available in multiple agencies within the U.S. Department for Health and Human Services (HHS). In prior years, placements have also been available in the Department of Justice and the Department of Education.

As a federal agency fellow, you will likely work in a hybrid pattern, with a few days per week in the agency's D.C.-area office and some work-from-home. You will be working side-by-side with career civil servants with deep expertise. You may also work with other SRCD fellows or fellows from other programs. In fact, some of your future colleagues may be SRCD fellowship alum themselves!

The Work You'll Do at Each Agency

Placement opportunities vary based on the agency needs. Several agencies have consistently offered placements for decades, including: the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE), the National Institute for Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), and the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE). Placements have also been available in the Office of Head Start and the Office of Child Care.

We differentiate between federal agencies that primarily conduct research and evaluation (NICHD and OPRE) and those that primary focus on the implementation of a specific social program (the Office of Head Start and Office of Child Care.)

- Research and evaluation offices - NICHD and OPRE - focus on funding research and evaluation activities. Their work includes assessing evidence, overseeing grants and contracts with researchers, assessing future research grant notices, and hosting expert meetings.
- Program offices like the Office of Head Start and the Office of Childcare are more involved in federal program operations and policy development. Here, you may contribute to regulatory revisions, policy memos, and coordination with technical assistance contractors. You will be translating existing research into program operations and policy implementation.

- ASPE, situated between research/evaluation and program offices, supports the HHS Secretary in policy and planning. As an ASPE fellow, you may engage in budget and legislation review, collaborate with program offices, and coordinate HHS programs addressing common issues. You may also oversee contractors, grantees, or develop new research funding opportunities.

We encourage applicants to research agencies before applying, as your experience will be very different, depending on where you go. You can also view the current fellows' Spotlight posts [here](#), to see what they have been working on. And don't forget, if you want to talk to a current or former fellow, reach out to policy@srcd.org and we'll be happy to help.

"Getting to learn the inner workings of an executive branch research office [has been my favorite part of the Fellowship]. There was a lot I did not know that I thought I did. But beyond the work, I really love my cohort and have also learned a great deal from them."



– Tamarie Willis, Executive Branch Fellow at OPRE (2022-2024)

Why should you apply?

- If you enjoy taking leadership on a range of topics, and you are not afraid to learn about new areas, this placement opportunity could be for you.
- Federal executive agency fellows may develop research funding, support new regulations, help with technical assistance to childcare programs, or support program evaluations, among other activities.

Learn more about the work current federal agency fellows did in their [Spotlight posts](#).

"The exposure to careers in government has been truly invaluable, and the exposure to many scientific fields beyond my own expertise has been very beneficial."



– Diahne Gumina, Executive Branch Fellow at NICHD (2022-2024)

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