

Policy Update: June 2017

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Spotlight on the SRCD Policy Fellow

Jenessa Malin, Ph.D., is an 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 contributions to OPRE's internal Methods Team and work focusing on programs serving infants and toddlers.

Legislative Branch Updates

[House and Senate Appropriations Subcommittee Hearings on Department of Education Budget](#)

On May 24, The House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies held a Department of Education (ED) budget hearing to discuss the president's FY2018 budget request. Two weeks later, on June 6, the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies held its ED budget hearing. In the House hearing, Subcommittee Chairman Tom Cole (R-OK) opened by praising the administration's investments in high quality charter schools and goals to protect the most vulnerable populations, but questioned cuts to programs designed to serve students from disadvantaged backgrounds, such as TRIO and GEAR UP, stating that he looked forward to discussing the rationale behind all of the proposed cuts. Subcommittee Ranking Member Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) stated in her opening remarks that the proposed budget is "alarming," arguing that it would shift much needed funding out of local public schools that 90% percent of students attend, and that the focus on vouchers would destabilize schools and communities. Representative DeLauro argued that "we need to focus policies on strengthening public schools, reducing class sizes, supporting the teaching profession, providing more one-on-one attention, boosting student enrichment opportunities, supporting parental involvement, and making high quality preschool available to all" as the way forward. The full committee Chairman, Rodney Frelinghuysen (R-NJ) and Ranking Member Nita M. Lowey (D-NY) also had the opportunity to give brief statements, with Representative Frelinghuysen praising ESSA and other standing programs and stressing the need for bipartisan work on strengthening education. Representative Lowey added that the proposed budget would do great harm by cutting over 22 education investments, such as Pell Grants and Title I funding, and would shift funding away from disadvantaged students.

The Senate hearing began with Subcommittee Chairman Roy Blunt (R-MO) stating that "this is a difficult budget request to defend" as Congress recently passed the FY2017 budget that eliminated many programs as a means to prioritize key funding, and this FY2018 request is a significant decrease even from that bill. He went on to say that "such a significant cut to the Department's budget is likely untenable," but he is looking forward to finding common ground in the budget and realigning the Department's role in the education system. Subcommittee Ranking Member Patty Murray (D-WA) said in her opening statement that "this budget would be devastating to our students and take away opportunities for so many families in this country" as the budget would cut federal education programs for K-12, higher education, and special education by 9.2 billion dollars in total. Full committee Chairman Thad Cochran (R-MS) and Vice Chairman Patrick Leahy (D-VT) also had an opportunity to give brief statements, with Senator Cochran calling on the secretary to support the training of teachers and Senator Leahy stressing that school choice is not an option for rural states where the nearest school may be an hour away, and to support all students through investments in public education.

In both the House and Senate hearings, Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos was called on to testify and defend the proposed FY18 budget. She opened her testimonies in both hearings by elaborating on her commitment to school choice and voicing her disapproval of the current federal reform efforts, stating “the achievement and attainment gaps experienced by poor and minority students, who are the primary focus of these Federal education programs, remain unacceptably large.” She then outlined the five principles leading to the administration’s request to reduce the department’s funding by 13%. The principles include: (1) providing new resources to promote school choice; (2) maintaining support for public schools through state grant programs; (3) supporting grants to encourage research and data collection; (4) reducing the complexity of funding for college and helping to make college education affordable; and (5) a commitment to improving the efficiency of the federal government. To add to her last point, she stated that the 22 programs that the budget proposed to cut are “duplicative, ineffective, or are better supported through State, local, or private efforts.” To watch the full House hearing and read witness testimony, click [here](#). For the full Senate hearing and witness testimony, click [here](#).

House Appropriations Subcommittee Hearing on National Science Foundation Budget

On June 7, the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies (CJS) held a National Science Foundation budget hearing. Subcommittee Chairman John Culberson (R-TX) opened the hearing by emphasizing the importance of National Science Foundation (NSF) research, stating that the committee would work to “preserve American leadership in scientific research” and that “in many fields, the National Science Foundation is the primary source of federal academic support.” He noted that the budget process has gotten off to a slower start than usual but that the CJS subcommittee would work hard to move appropriations for NSF forward. Subcommittee Ranking Member José Serrano (D-NY) used his opening statement to express concern about the president’s proposed cuts to the NSF budget, stating “the NSF budget request for this year is an extreme example of the problems with the president’s proposal to increase defense spending by \$54 billion at the expense of domestic priorities. There is little justification for cutting vital agencies like NSF simply to fund a Defense Department already receiving more than half a trillion dollars each year.” He further emphasized his support for NSF, saying “the discoveries obtained by investing at NSF help our economy grow, sustain our economic competitiveness, and enable us to remain the world leader in innovation.” Chairman Culberson then introduced the hearing’s only witness, NSF Director Dr. France Córdova. Dr. Córdova opened her testimony by reminding those present that “NSF is the only federal agency dedicated to the support of basic research and education across all fields of science and engineering. We support research that enhances our nation’s security, drives the U.S. economy and

advances our knowledge to sustain America’s technological leadership.” She also used her testimony to highlight the scientific advances made by NSF-funded research in the fields of information technology, artificial intelligence (AI), and astrophysics, and the impacts these advances can have on diverse fields such as transportation, manufacturing, and health care. To read Dr. Córdoba’s written testimony, which includes additional details on the NSF FY2018 budget request, and watch the full hearing, click [here](#).

Congressional Briefing on Family Homelessness

On June 6, the American Psychological Association, the National Center for Housing and Child Welfare, the Child Welfare League of America, and SchoolHouse Connection hosted a congressional briefing entitled “Escaping Homelessness: Helping Families Reach Their Full Potential.” The briefing opened with a general overview of what family homelessness looks like in the United States, noting that we have reached a “crisis point” where families are the fastest growing segment of the homeless population and that there has been a 34% increase in the number of homeless school-aged children since 2009. A brief [documentary](#) was then shown that provided a first-hand look at family homelessness in America and the many challenges that families face when they lack stable housing. The speakers covered a wide variety of topics, including: the need for an improved evidence-based approach to screen both parents and children to assess the need for services in addition to housing; the urgency of addressing early childhood homelessness given what we know about the lifelong consequences of adversity in early childhood and the protective role that high quality early childhood programs can play; and the link between family homelessness and the child welfare system, including an overview of the successful Supportive Housing for Families (SHF) model used in Connecticut to address this linkage. A key theme throughout all presentations was that current policies related to homelessness focus almost entirely on the needs of adults. Thus, the presenters also spoke at length about the importance of the Homeless Children and Youth Act of 2017 ([H.R. 1511/S. 611](#)), a bicameral, bipartisan bill that intends to “amend the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act to meet the needs of homeless children, youth, and families, and honor the assessments and priorities of local communities.” If passed, this legislation would allow communities to use HUD Homeless Assistance funding more flexibly and to tailor housing and services to better meet the needs of children and families. This briefing also highlighted two recent publications related to child and family homelessness: a special edition of [Advances in Child and Family Policy and Practice](#) and a special edition of [Child Welfare](#). Speakers included: Mary Haskett, Ph.D., Professor of Psychology, North Carolina State University; Carmela DeCandia, PsyD, Founder and Owner, Artemis Associates, LLC; Grace Whitney, Ph.D., MPC, IMH-E, Director of Early Childhood Initiatives, SchoolHouse Connection; Preston Britner, Ph.D., Professor of Human Development and Families Studies,

University of Connecticut; Anne Farrell, Ph.D., Director of Research, Chapin Hall, University of Chicago; and Ruth Ann White, MSSA, Executive Director, National Council on Homelessness and Child Welfare.

Executive Branch Updates

Dr. Francis Collins to Continue as NIH Director

On June 6, the White House announced that Dr. Francis Collins will stay on as Director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). As previously reported in the [January 2017 edition of Policy Update](#), Dr. Collins was asked to stay on by the new administration, but it was unclear at the time if this would be a permanent arrangement. His tenure as NIH Director has now been extended, and he continues to receive broad support from the congressional committees with jurisdiction over NIH. Following the announcement that Dr. Collins would stay on as NIH Director, Senator Lamar Alexander (R-TN), Chairman of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions, said in a statement “There’s nobody better qualified than Francis Collins to help accelerate the medical miracles that have the potential to help virtually every American family.”

National Academies Report on the Value of Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences at NSF

The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine recently released a consensus study report by an expert committee aimed at assessing the value of social, behavioral, and economic sciences at the National Science Foundation (NSF) to national priorities. The [report](#), completed at the request of the National Science Foundation, examined three specific questions: (1) Do the social, behavioral, and economic (SBE) sciences advance NSF’s mission? (2) Do they advance the mission of other federal agencies? and (3) Do they advance the work of business and industry? The report concludes that “Nearly every major challenge the United States faces—from alleviating unemployment to protecting itself from terrorism—requires understanding the causes and consequences of people’s behavior.” The committee responded in the affirmative to each of the three core questions, concluding that the SBE sciences overall contribute “knowledge, methods and tools that further the mission of the NSF to advance health, prosperity and welfare, national defense, and progress in science.” The committee noted that in making these contributions, SBE research supported by the NSF also “helps other agencies achieve their missions,” and that the SBE sciences have made contributions that have applications “to business and industry and that enhanced the U.S. economy.” The report provides examples to illustrate each set of contributions. The

committee also made a set of recommendations to strengthen the contributions of the SBE sciences at NSF:

- To undertake a strategic planning process to identify the highest priority questions in the SBE that reflect NSF's mission, as well as the resources and methods that would be needed to move forward with these questions;
- To continue to support tools, methods and teams to advance the SBE sciences while facilitating effective interactions with other scientific fields as well as other agencies and organizations;
- To support training that is in keeping with the way science is evolving, including preparation in more data intensive, interdisciplinary and team oriented work; and
- To work more intensively to communicate the results and values of SBE research and how it advances NSF's mission.

National Advisory Child Health and Human Development Council Meeting

The National Advisory Child Health and Human Development Council met on June 8 to advise the director of the *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD). The director of NICHD, Dr. Diana Bianchi opened the meeting with the director's report. Dr. Bianchi provided an update on budget and staffing as well as an update on the vision goals that she outlined at the January 2017 meeting. Regarding the budget, Dr. Bianchi noted that NICHD received \$1.38 billion in the FY17 omnibus, but that the president's budget request for FY18 includes just over \$1 billion, a cut of \$345 million. She stated that NICHD was working hard to soften the impact of any cut to the budget, but that there was also cause for optimism, since the leadership of both the House and Senate Appropriations Committees have strongly supported funding for NIH in the past. Dr. Bianchi also addressed the ongoing hiring freeze, noting that it includes special government employees, such as Advisory Council members, and that NICHD is eager to approve replacements for departing council members as soon as the hiring freeze is fully lifted. Dr. Bianchi then provided an update on progress since January on the vision goals laid out at the last Advisory Council meeting. She discussed work on building bridges both within and outside of NIH through a variety of recent meetings and collaborations. These include: a partnership meeting with the National Human Genome Research Institute to discuss additional opportunities for collaboration; a meeting with directors of the All of Us research program to ensure the representation of NICHD populations in trans-NIH initiatives; participation in Gates Foundation working groups on maternal, newborn, and child health and contraceptive research; and visits to several local hospitals. Progress on other vision goals was also discussed, including changes to the website to better define NICHD's brand, a new plan to have a patient speak at every council meeting to better incorporate the voice of the patient in all of NICHD's work, and progress on analyzing the

best way to invest training dollars in the scholars most likely to succeed. In addition to the director's report, updates were given by several divisions and offices, and detailed presentations were given on the NICHD budget, how the 21st Century Cures Act impacts NICHD, and the grant support index. Presentations from the open portion of the Advisory Council meeting are available [here](#), and the webcast of the event is available [here](#).

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, Administration for Children and Families (ACF), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services:

- (1) *Wise Guys: Implementing a Boys-Only Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program in Davenport, Iowa* This [brief](#) summarizes the implementation of the Wise Guys boys-only sex education program in Davenport, Iowa middle schools.
- (2) *Supporting Statewide Implementation of Evidence-Based Teen Pregnancy Prevention Programs* This [brief](#) summarizes the implementation infrastructure of Personal Responsibility Education Program (PREP) evidence-based teen pregnancy prevention programs in California, Maine, Pennsylvania, and South Carolina.
- (3) *Implementing a Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program in Rural Kentucky* This [brief](#) describes the implementation of an adapted version of the Reducing the Risk sex education program in rural Kentucky.
- (4) *The Right Tool for the Job: a Meta-Regression of Employment Strategies' Effects on Different Outcomes* This [brief](#) and corresponding [appendices](#) look at all of the studies in the Employment Strategies for Low-Income Adults Evidence Review (ESER) to identify interventions and strategies that improve employment outcomes for low-income adults.
- (5) *Pima Community College Pathways to Healthcare Program: Implementation and Early Impact Report* This [report](#) details the implementation and early impacts of the Pathways to Healthcare Program, a career pathway program operated by Pima Community College to help low-income, low-skilled adults complete

occupational training.

New Publications from the Institute of Education Sciences

Several new publications are available from the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), U.S. Department of Education:

(1) *Financial Literacy of 15-Year-Olds: Results From PISA 2015* This [Data Point](#) from the National Center for Education Statistics displays the results of the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) financial literacy assessments from the United States and 14 other education systems across the world.

(2) *The Condition of Education 2017* This congressionally mandated annual [report](#) from the National Center for Education Statistics provides a comprehensive summary of the latest education data.

Federal Funding Opportunities

This month's FFO highlights a group of Institute of Education Sciences funding opportunities. IES's purpose in awarding these grants is to provide national leadership in expanding fundamental knowledge and understanding of (1) developmental and school readiness outcomes for infants and toddlers with or at risk for a disability, and (2) education outcomes for all students from early childhood education through postsecondary and adult education. The Institute's National Center for Education Research (NCER) will hold five competitions and the Institute's National Center for Special Education Research (NCSE) will hold five competitions. Completed applications are due by March 1, 2018. Click [here](#) to read about these and other federal funding opportunities.