

Policy Update: March 2017

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Register Now: Upcoming Webinar on Parenting Young Children

Date: Wednesday, April 26

Time: 12:00-1:00 pm Eastern

About the Webinar: The National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine recently released a report informing a national framework for strengthening the capacity of parents of young children birth to age 8. The report is intended to serve as a roadmap for the future of parenting and family support policies, practices, and research in the United States. The full report can be accessed [here](#).

Three members of the study committee that authored this report will discuss the report's conclusions and recommendations:

Dr. Kimberly Boller, Senior Fellow, Mathematica Policy Research

Dr. Natasha Cabrera, Professor of Human Development and Director, Family Involvement Laboratory, University of Maryland, College Park

Dr. Eric Dearing, Professor, Counseling, Developmental, and Educational Psychology Department, Lynch School of Education, Boston College

Click [here](#) to register for this webinar.

Policy-Relevant Sessions at the 2017 SRCD Biennial Meeting

SRCD's 2017 Biennial Meeting will take place April 6-8 in Austin, Texas. There will be a number of policy-focused sessions on a range of issues at the biennial meeting. Please see the [February edition of Policy Update](#) for additional details about federal agency sessions, the SRCD Policy Fellowship panel and reception, and policy-focused preconferences, or view all sessions in the [online program](#).

Spotlight on the SRCD Policy Fellow

Elizabeth Wehrspann Day, Ph.D., is a Congressional Fellow whose placement is in the Office of Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY). Click [here](#) to learn more about her contributions to legislation, such as meeting with constituents and revising legislative text to include more research.

Legislative Branch Updates

Senate Votes to Reverse Key Obama Administration Education Regulations

On March 8, the Senate passed a joint resolution with a vote of 59-40 to repeal a regulation, finalized in October 2016, which required states to evaluate and publicly report on the effectiveness of teacher training programs annually. This resolution also prevents the U.S. Department of Education from creating a similar rule in the future. In addition, on March 9, the Senate voted 50-49 to repeal a key accountability rule on how states evaluate school performance under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). This regulation, finalized in November 2016, clarified how ESSA will be implemented and outlined standards for states to rate schools. Senator Rob Portman (R-OH) was the only Republican to vote against the resolution. *Congressional Quarterly* reports that Democratic lawmakers, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, civil rights groups, and the American

Federation for Teachers all opposed the resolution repealing this rule. Both of these joint resolutions were previously adopted by the House of Representatives in February.

Senate Committee Hearing on Improving Outcomes for Youth in the Juvenile Justice System

On February 28, the Senate Judiciary Committee held a hearing entitled "Improving Outcomes for Youth in the Juvenile Justice System." Chairman Charles E. Grassley (R-IA) opened the hearing by calling attention to the need for alternatives to confinement for juveniles, especially non-violent offenders and runaways. He stated concern for the physical and mental well-being of these young offenders, as well as the economic strain confinement has on taxpayers, noting that "Ensuring the stability and future prosperity of these youths might call for something other than a stint in a juvenile detention facility, which costs taxpayers an average of about \$88,000 per year, per juvenile." Senator Grassley called for Congress to pass the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Reauthorization Act (JJDPRA) in order to address these problems. Senator Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), co-sponsor of the reauthorization bill, spoke of the wide array of evidence-based alternatives laid out in the bill and of research showing that the current system of incarcerating nonviolent juvenile offenders has been counterproductive. For example, he cited a Cook County National Bureau of Economic Research study, which found that juveniles who experienced confinement were more likely to drop out of high school and be incarcerated as adults than juveniles who were not confined. Senator Whitehouse also urged Congress not to create unfunded mandates or cut evidence-based programs in the reauthorization. Witnesses addressed a variety of issues in their testimonies, including: the abuse to prison pipeline for young girls, the counterproductive nature of juvenile confinement, the promise of community-based programs, the promise of JJDPRA based on evidence from the state of Iowa, the importance of data in creating successful alternatives, and the monetary benefits of alternatives to juvenile incarceration. Witnesses included: Yasmin Vafa, Executive Director, Rights4Girls; Jake Horowitz, State Policy Director, Public Safety Performance Project, The Pew Charitable Trusts; Dave Kuker, Juvenile Justice Specialist, Division Of Criminal And Juvenile Justice Planning, Iowa Department Of Human Rights; and Jinique Blyden, PACE Center for Girls, Inc. Click [here](#) to watch the hearing and read witness testimonies.

House Subcommittee Hearing on Home Visiting Program Reauthorization

On March 15, the Human Resources Subcommittee of the House Ways and Means Committee held a hearing entitled "Reauthorization of the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) Program." Chairman Adrian Smith (R-NE) opened the hearing by pointing to the effectiveness of the MIECHV program both for the families it serves directly and for the return on taxpayer dollars. In particular, he called attention

to the program’s focus on evidence, stating that “in order for a home visiting program to be funded, an evaluation must show the program as demonstrating significant, positive outcomes in areas such as reducing child abuse and neglect, improving maternal and child health, and improving economic self-sufficiency.” In his opening remarks, Ranking Member Danny Davis (D-IL) stated that MIECHV is a vital program for keeping children safe and for reaching the neediest families. He also echoed Chairman Smith’s sentiments on evidence, noting that MIECHV has been effective in improving program coordination, emphasizing models supported by evidence, and expanding availability of services. In addition to the services provided by Illinois’ own home visiting programs, he stated “in my Congressional district, MIECHV directly provides home visiting services to 219 additional families and supports innovative pilot projects for homeless families and parents and foster youth.” Witness testimony focused on a range of issues, including: the role of Nurse-Family Partnerships in reducing hospital visits, developmental delays, and infant deaths; the importance of home visiting for young, low-income mothers; the implementation process at the state level, including needs assessments informing the choice of evidence-based programs; more integrated data collection and professional development for home visitors in states as a result of MIECHV; and long-term benefits of home visiting including reduced risk of chronic health problems later in life. Witnesses included: Beth Russell, Nurse Home Visitor, Penn Medicine Lancaster General; Rosa Valentin, Client, Penn Medicine Lancaster General; Eric Bellamy, Home Visiting Manager, Children’s Trust of South Carolina; and Diana Rauner, President, The Ounce of Prevention Fund. Click [here](#) to watch the full hearing, and [here](#) for witness testimonies.

House Subcommittee Hearing on HHS Early Childhood Education Programs

On March 16, the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Subcommittee of the House Committee on Appropriations held a hearing entitled “Investing in the Future - Early Childhood Education Programs at the Department of Health and Human Services.” In his opening remarks, Subcommittee Chairman Tom Cole (R-OK) stated that “children with strong foundations have the best chance of becoming successful adults,” and that early childhood education programs not only help children develop socially and cognitively, but have also shown a return on investment in areas such as better health outcomes and reduced K-12 spending when fewer students need to repeat grades. Ranking Member Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) noted in her opening remarks that early childhood interventions reduce inequality and help narrow the achievement gap, and that while early childhood programs have “overwhelming bipartisan support,” congressional appropriators have not adequately funded these programs. Witnesses provided testimony on a range of issues, including: the need for programs that both provide services for young

children and support parental employment, the potential for innovative funding mechanisms (e.g. state matching grants, public-private partnerships) in addition to increased federal investment, investing more in younger children in order to address the "word gap" earlier in life, the need for continuity from Early Head Start to Head Start, and a call to increase funding for Early Head Start and Head Start for 3 year olds (in order to serve children for more than one year), with one witness noting "you need more than one year of programming to help children overcome a lifetime of poverty." Witnesses included: Jeanne Brooks-Gunn, Ph.D., Virginia and Leonard Marx Professor of Child Development, Teachers College, Columbia University; Steven Dow, J.D., Executive Director, Community Action Project of Tulsa County ("CAP Tulsa"); Jennifer Garner, Actress, Trustee, Save the Children; Don Millican, Spokesman, George Kaiser Family Foundation. To watch the full hearing and read witness testimonies, click [here](#).

Briefing on Preventing the Negative Effects of Poverty on Child Development

On March 1, First Focus, the National Prevention Science Coalition to Improve Lives, and the Bennett Pierce Prevention Research Center at Penn State University hosted a briefing entitled "Preventing the Negative Effects of Poverty on Child Development: Evidence-Based Policies and Solutions." Dr. Ron Prinz, Carolina Distinguished Professor of Psychology and Director of the Parenting & Family Research Center at the University of South Carolina, presented on the need for evidence-based interventions and policies to reduce poverty and its detrimental effects on child development. He noted that children living in poverty face greater health and developmental risks than children who do not live in poverty, and that there are evidence-based preventive interventions across a variety of fields that could help address the many risk factors that children living in poverty face. Dr. Prinz also emphasized that the goal of prevention science is an overall reduction in prevalence at the population level. He concluded by noting that cross-sector prevention programs are especially important, since even in prevention science much work remains siloed. Next, Dr. Ben Gibbs, Assistant Professor of Sociology at Brigham Young University, presented on Utah's approach to addressing intergenerational poverty across the state. He started by noting that most states actually do a good job of addressing situational poverty, but that little progress has been made in reducing intergenerational poverty. Utah uses a two-generation approach that focuses on the needs of parents and their children simultaneously, and identified four key areas to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty: early childhood development, health, education, and family economic stability. Dr. Gibbs noted that Utah is somewhat unique in using a locally-focused approach to address intergenerational poverty. Since needs are highly varied among the largely rural counties in Utah, each county has a local committee tasked with developing a set of goals and strategies for their county and utilizing the knowledge of local organizations and individuals who best know the needs of the communities in that county. Finally, Bruce Lesley, President

of First Focus, presented on evidence-based policy and legislation focused on cutting child poverty by 50% in the next decade, using the UK Child Poverty Target as an example. He started by outlining the trends in federal funding for children, noting that Congress invests less than 8% in kids, and that number declines every year. He then introduced the work of the [Child Poverty Action Group](#) (CPAG), a group trying to start the conversation about child poverty on Capitol Hill. In particular, CPAG focuses on encouraging legislators to adopt a child poverty target; much like the UK did in 2000. The briefing was moderated by Deborah Stein, J.D., Network Director, Partnership for America's Children.

Briefing on Improving Education through Research-Practice Partnerships

On March 15, Knowledge Alliance hosted a Congressional briefing entitled “Improving Education through Research-Practice Partnerships: The Work of the Regional Educational Laboratory Program.” Michele McLaughlin, President of Knowledge Alliance, opened the briefing with an overview of the work of the ten Regional Educational Laboratories (RELs). The RELs work to provide support for a more evidence-based education system by partnering with districts and states to use research and data to improve academic outcomes for students. Representative Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR) then spoke of the important role that REL Northwest has played in improving schools in her district and across the northwest. Representative Bonamici noted that the work of the RELs is central to current education policy, since the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) heavily emphasized the role of evidence. She also expressed concern about continued funding for RELs and IES more broadly, encouraging briefing attendees to voice support for fully funding RELs and IES. Jon Bridges, Administrator for Instructional Accountability in the Beaverton, OR school district, discussed how partnering with REL Northwest not only allowed his district to address key issues such as improving graduation rates and reducing racial disparities in school discipline, but also helped facilitate collaboration between multiple districts throughout the state. He noted that partnering with the REL provided support for documentation and knowledge sharing between districts that would not have been possible without the REL helping to facilitate a professional learning community of districts throughout the state. Next, Gregory Keith, Chief Academic Officer for the Minnesota Department of Education, discussed how his state education agency partnered with REL Midwest to develop and pilot a variety of survey tools. He noted that the REL's support in piloting was especially important because the teacher and principal evaluations informed human capital decisions, therefore the reliability and validity of the surveys was essential. Keith stated that he didn't “think the work would have happened if we didn't have the REL,” due to the limited time and capacity that the state education agency has to do this type of work. Muhammed Chaudhry, President and CEO of the Silicon Valley Education Foundation then discussed how his organization works with REL West on the Elevate [Math] program throughout Silicon Valley. This program

responds to data showing that many students in the area repeat a math class in middle or high school, sometimes multiple times. Chaudhry noted that the research-practice partnership benefited all parties: it sparked a culture change in his own organization, leading to a stronger focus on evidence-based work, and embedded researchers in the project and the community so they could directly see who benefits from their research. The panel was moderated by Vivian Tseng, Vice President, Program, William T. Grant Foundation.

Executive Branch Updates

Trump Administration Releases Fiscal Year 2018 "Skinny Budget"

On March 16, the Trump Administration released preliminary details of the FY 2018 President's budget request, or the "skinny budget." A full budget request is expected to be released sometime in May. The President's budget request is the first step in the federal budget process and will be used as a framework by Congress and the Federal Agencies as they move forward with the FY18 budget. The budget proposes major reductions in nondefense discretionary programs to fund a \$54 billion increase in defense spending, and proposes eliminating federal funding for several entire agencies. Since the administration has not yet released a full budget request, for now the budget includes only Cabinet-level departments and several other major agencies, lumping many other agencies (including the National Science Foundation) into the category "other agencies." Analysis of the budget request from the Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA) notes that it is "important to remember that the President's budget is just one step in the annual appropriations process. Congress still holds the power of the purse," and that many of the proposals included in this budget "will be dead on arrival in Congress." [Click here](#) to read COSSA's full analysis of the "skinny budget."

Meeting of the National Advisory Mental Health Council

On February 9, the National Advisory Mental Health Council (NAMHC) met to advise the Secretary of HHS, the Director of the National Institutes of Health, and the Director of the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) on the policies and activities relating to the conduct and support of mental health research, training, and other programs of the NIMH. In his Director's Report, new NIMH director Joshua Gordon, M.D., Ph.D., introduced himself as a neuroscientist and psychiatrist. He indicated that passage of the CURES Act at the end of 2016 signaled bipartisan support for work on mental health issues and that NIMH helps to lead the BRAIN Initiative, for which the CURES Act provides funding. In terms of budget, he indicated that while the 2016 budget saw a modest increase in funding for NIMH in appropriated dollars, there is now flat funding through the 2017 Continuing Resolution. He gave selected highlights of NIMH funded research, including:

research on identifying genes that contribute to the development of schizophrenia and other forms of psychosis involving studying the links between genes and specific behaviors (such as predisposition to auditory hallucination); research on the heterogeneity of psychiatric disorders being studied in new ways with large datasets (such as large imaging datasets); research on the use of economic incentives to improve adherence to HIV medication; and research on improving suicide risk screening and detection in emergency departments. Dr. Gordon outlined current NIMH priorities as: therapeutic clinical trials, including those focusing on psychosocial interventions; a greater emphasis on genomics with a new NAMHC Genomics Workgroup; and behavioral neuroscience work. Dr. Gordon identified his personal priorities for NIMH as balancing portfolios involving short, medium and longer term investments. Three research presentations were then given focusing on each of these priority areas. First, David Redish, Ph.D., Distinguished McKnight University Professor, Department of Neuroscience, University of Minnesota, gave a presentation on computational psychiatry, a longer-term goal of NIMH. David Roth, M.D., Ph.D., Professor, Department of Pharmacology, School of Medicine, University of North Carolina, then gave a presentation on neural circuit technologies, a medium-term goal. Cheryl King, Ph.D., Professor, Department of Psychiatry, University of Michigan then gave a presentation on opportunities to reduce the suicide rate, a short-term goal and something that Dr. Gordon would like to see NIMH address immediately. The open portion of the council meeting concluded with a discussion and request for approval of concepts ("concept clearances") for requests for applications (RFAs) in areas where research gaps have been identified. Dr. Dianne Rausch, Ph.D., Director of the Division of AIDS Research, led this discussion, introducing three concepts for RFAs for consideration: (1) development of mobile technology interventions to improve health outcomes of youth infected with HIV; (2) HIV health care systems approaches to improve viral suppression; and (3) research focusing on altered neural pathways, receptors and networks in HIV-induced CNS dysfunction. A motion was made and seconded to approve all three and there was unanimous approval by the NAMHC. The agenda and minutes from earlier NAMHC meetings are 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) *How Far are Early Care and Education Arrangements from Children's Homes?* This [fact sheet](#) shows the distance between families' households and the locations of the regular early care and education (ECE) arrangements they use for their children under 5 years old.
- (2) *Measures Used in Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) Validation Studies* This [brief](#) outlines the measures used in the Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) validation studies.
- (3) *Supporting the Use of Administrative Data in Early Care and Education Research: Resource Series* This [resource series](#) focuses on assisting child care administrators and their research partners in using administrative data.
- (4) *Early Head Start Research and Evaluation Project (EHSREP): 1996-2010 Measures Compendium* This [report](#) describes all of the data sets, available documentation, and measures used in Early Head Start Research and Evaluation Project (EHSREP) from 1996-2010.
- (5) *The Health Profession Opportunity Grants (HPOG) 1.0: Eligibility Criteria and Application Procedures* This [brief](#) describes the eligibility criteria and application procedures for The Health Profession Opportunity Grants (HPOG).
- (6) *Using Within-Site Experimental Evidence to Reduce Cross-Site Attributional Bias in Connecting Program Components to Program Impacts* This [report](#) evaluates the Cross-Site Attributional Model Improved by Calibration to Within-Site Individual Randomization Findings (CAMIC) method, designed to reduce bias in randomization.
- (7) *Health Profession Opportunity Grants (HPOG) Impact Study: Technical Supplement to the Evaluation Design Report: Impact Analysis Plan* This [analysis plan](#) looks at the overall effectiveness of the Health Profession Opportunity Grants (HPOG) and how variations in the program affect impacts.
- (8) *Providing Financial Support for Children: Views and Experiences of Low-Income Fathers in the PACT Evaluation* This [brief](#) details low-income fathers' views on responsible parenthood programs and their experiences with the child support system.
- (9) *Well-being of Young Children after Experiencing Homelessness* This joint OPRE-ASPE [brief](#) looks at the academic skills, behavioral challenges, and developmental delays of young children 20 months after staying

in emergency homeless shelters with their families.

New Publications from the Institute of Education Sciences

(1) *The National Indian Education Study: 2015* This [report](#) from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) summarizes the educational experiences of American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) students in the United States at grades 4 and 8.

(2) *Evaluation of the Retired Mentors for New Teachers Program* This [report](#) from the Regional Education Laboratory (REL) Central Region evaluates a program from Aurora Public Schools in Aurora, Colorado. The program uses recently retired, master educators to support probationary teachers in high-need elementary schools.

Federal Funding Opportunities

This month's FFO highlights an Administration for Children and Families funding opportunity that invites researchers to develop a foster/adoptive parent training program to include intensive preparation and development components that reflect the capacities required of successful foster/adoptive parents. Development of this program would include research on the common characteristics of foster/adoptive families that have succeeded in terms of well-being and stability. The program would be inclusive of developmental, training, and capacity needs of individuals/families that are interested in becoming foster parents, as well as those who would be interested in fostering with the intention to adopt. Completed applications are due by June 1, 2017. Click [here](#) to read about this and other federal funding opportunities.