

**Child Care & Early Education
RESEARCH CONNECTIONS**

Research Connections Fellows
Program: Introduction

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What you will find in this Introduction

Welcome to the Child Care and Early Education *Research Connections* Fellows program! This introduction will familiarize you with the purpose and goals of Research Connections along with providing you with a description about the Fellows Program and the benefits and responsibilities. You will find the following sections in this guide:

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If you have any questions or need further clarification on any of this information you may contact the *Research Connections* Fellows Program Director, Sharmila Lawrence at sl684@columbia.edu.

About Research Connections

Research Connections promotes high quality research and the use of that research in policymaking. We reach our audience through our web site: www.researchconnections.org

Through a free, **easy to use** web site, one can quickly search the full text of thousands of resources relevant to the field of child care and early education. Interactive tools allow users to refine their searches, download full text documents, build customized tables on state policies, compare state demographics, and analyze research data online.

This **comprehensive** and unbiased collection includes scholarly research, policy briefs, government reports, data, and instruments from a wide range of disciplines and sources, including multiple federal agencies. *Research Connections* compiles and distributes bibliographies, develops issue briefs, and synthesizes research on key topics.

Research Connections offers **public access** to child care and early education research data, some of which have never before been publicly available. Researchers can download analysis-ready data directly to their desktop or analyze selected data online free of charge. Data training workshops and an archive for research projects serve the entire field.

The **integrated** database links written documents to the actual instruments and data files on which their findings are based, provides links from the data files to the publications based on them, and links resources on similar topics, by the same author, or funded by the same agency.

Our database is **up to date** and continually growing. Currently, we provide access to over 15,000 resources, including 148 datasets.

Research Connections **reaches out** to everyone who can make use of research findings to improve the provision of child care and early education, to promote children's well-being, and to support working families.

Research Connections is supported by the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation and the Child Care Bureau, Office of Family Assistance, Administration for Children and Families, in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It is operated through a joint partnership between the National Center for Children in Poverty, at the Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University, and the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research, at the Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan.

Purpose of the Fellows Program

The purpose of the *Research Connections* Fellows program is three-fold:

- 1) To promote more widespread and thorough use of the *Research Connections* Web site in responding to policy questions
- 2) To inform the continual improvement of the Web site and the development of new policy-relevant content
- 3) To broaden dissemination of policy-relevant research questions to researchers in the field and to help bridge the gap between research and policy.

Benefits to Fellows

This program provides an opportunity for professionals to:

- 1) Gain greater familiarity with the many facets of the *Research Connections* Web site and use this knowledge to strengthen the technical assistance they provide to their constituents.
- 2) Provide input on ways to improve the Web site and share ideas on new content to be developed that would be responsive to their constituents.
- 3) Collaborate with representatives from a range of other policy intermediary organizations and participate in peer-to-peer trainings and meetings.
- 4) Help in the development and dissemination of new research ideas to the child care and early education field.
- 5) Participate in various data trainings organized by *Research Connections* at a subsidized rate.
- 6) Fellows' names and affiliations will be displayed on the *Research Connections* Web site and they will be recognized as an integral part of the *Research Connections*' organizational structure.
- 7) Fellows will be subscribed to a 'RC Fellows listserv' that will provide an open forum for dialogue and communication with one another and with *Research Connections*.

Responsibilities of Fellows

- Fellows are appointed for a one-year term with the opportunity to renew this appointment.
- Fellows are expected to attend a preliminary peer-to-peer training meeting
- In advance of the meeting, Fellows will be asked to submit examples of various Technical Assistance requests that they have received.
- Following the training meeting, Fellows will be invited to participate in quarterly webinars, organized by *Research Connections*, and will be expected to participate in at least two of these webinars over the course of their one year term. These webinars will be an opportunity for all *Research Connections* Fellows to hear about new research in the field, share feedback and experiences with using the site and to highlight any new topics of interest to their constituents.

- Periodically, Fellows will receive announcements about noteworthy new research and other resources from *Research Connections* through the ‘RC Fellows listserv’ and will be asked to share these with their constituents and other contacts that may benefit.
- Fellows will also have the opportunity, if interested, to contribute to the development of new content for the *Research Connections* Web site including Key Topic Resource Lists and research briefs.