SCRA Practice Conversation: Community Psychologists Influencing Federal Human Services Policy

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FEDERAL SERVICE

- Challenging hiring process to navigate
  - AAAS Fellowship
  - SRCD Fellowship
  - Presidential Management Fellowship

- Landscape of civil service and Presidential appointees

- Completely different incentive structure from academia

- Long time horizon for major policy shifts
United States Department of Agriculture—Food and Nutrition Service

Evaluator *(Social Science Analyst 2008-2010)*
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Evaluation Branch
- $10M evaluation of incentives for SNAP participants to purchase healthy foods authorized in the 2008 Farm Bill
- Food deserts
- Farmers markets and other retailers in SNAP

Branch Chief for SNAP Analysis (2010-2014)
- 5 direct reports
- Quick turnaround policy and legislative analysis
- Infrastructure of survey and administrative data
Federal Programs Assisting Low-Income Individuals and Families

Social Security Administration
- Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Medicare
- Social Security Benefits

Department of Education
- Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)
- Title I
- Title IV
- Head Start
- Early Head Start
- Career and Technical Education
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
- Perkins Career and Technical Education Program

Department of Labor
- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)
- Workforce Investment Act (WIA)
- Job Corps
- National Apprenticeship Act
- Trade Adjustment Assistance Program

Department of Health and Human Services
- Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS)
- Administration for Children and Families (ACF)
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
- Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)
- Administration on Community Living (ACL)
- Administration on Aging (AoA)
- Administration for Children and Families (ACF)

Department of Agriculture
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)
- School Lunch Program
- School Breakfast Program
- Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)

Department of the Interior
- National Park Service
- Fish and Wildlife Service
- Bureau of Land Management

Department of Veterans Affairs
- Veterans Health Administration
- Veteran Employment and Education Transition Program (VEET)
- Disability Compensation
- Educational Assistance for Former Service Members

Department of the Treasury
- Internal Revenue Service (IRS)
- Financial Management Service (FMS)

Department of Housing and Urban Development
- Public Housing
- Federal Housing Administration (FHA)
- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)
- Housing Choice Voucher Program

Department of Commerce
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)
- National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST)
- Small Business Administration (SBA)

Department of Energy
- Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy
- Energy Information Administration (EIA)

Federal Emergency Management Agency
- Disaster Assistance
- Preparedness
- Hazard Mitigation

Key
- Additional category
- Associated department

Note: This chart represents the wide range of federal programs that are targeted toward or that predominantly serve individuals and families with low-incomes, as of fiscal year 2023. Programs are categorized according to the types of key services and benefits they provide. Other federal programs not included in this chart may also serve people with low incomes, and some programs listed may provide categories of services and benefits beyond those identified here.
Director of the **Division of Family and Community Policy** (formerly Division of Economic Support for Families; 2014-present)

- **Up to 11 direct reports**, including policy analysts (MPP, MPA), sociologists, and a historian

- A broad **cross-cutting perspective** on how individual programs interact

- Ability to **coordinate** across the department and the federal government

- Lead **legislative development** for the President’s Budget for the Administration for Children and Families (ACF)

- Close working **relationships** with ACF program leadership and staff, and across the federal government

- Conduct mostly quick and medium-term **policy research** ourselves and through contracts

- Robust **analytic capabilities** to help determine how different policy options could work best (quantitative, qualitative, and modeling skills)
HHS Programs Covered
All 60+ ACF Programs and More

Division of Family and Community Policy
- TANF
- Healthy Marriage/Responsible Fatherhood
- Child Support
- Access and Visitation Grant Program
- Refugees and Unaccompanied Children
- Community Services Programs
- Family Violence
- Runaway and Homeless Youth
- Human Trafficking
- Administration for Native Americans

Division of Children and Youth Policy
- Child Welfare and Adoption
- Head Start and Early Head Start
- Child Care and Development Fund
- Home Visiting
- Preschool Development Grants
- Teen Pregnancy Prevention

The Division of Data and Technical Analysis provides quantitative and qualitative analyses related to all ACF programs and human services more broadly.
DAY-TO-DAY

- Middle manager between appointed leadership/Senior Executive Service and my career staff direct-reports
  - Strategic information sharing
  - Context awareness and interpretation
- Strategic vision for the division and office
  - Research planning and execution
- Editing and clearance
- Human resources, IT, and procurement
- Relationship building and maintenance
- Problem solving
  - Coaching
  - Service leadership
- Pinch-hitting
CROSS CUTTING INITIATIVES

Leading formal work groups
- Interagency Council on Economic Mobility

Representing HHS on cross-government priorities
- Homelessness—lead HHS coordination on families and youth
- Place-based initiatives

Coordinating informally across HHS on cross-cutting topics
- COVID-19 human services response and recovery
  - Virtual Human Services (tele-human services)
- Human services disaster response
- Criminal justice involvement and reentry from incarceration
- Strengthening federal training and technical assistance
SELECTED PRIORITY AREA: COVID-19 RESPONSE AND RECOVERY

- Virtual human services: what kinds of services work well when delivered virtually, for whom, under what circumstances?
  - Recent research project and March convening on lessons across programs
  - Paper on considerations around equity and assisting under-served groups

- Analyzing economic trends and equitable recovery:
  - Key economic indicators, including poverty, housing insecurity, child care
  - Impacts for particularly hard-hit populations, including Black individuals, Hispanics, women, and families with children
  - Developed tools to help programs and families access new benefits and flexibilities (e.g. emergency paid family leave, Economic Impact Payments)

- Informing future emergency response, with a forthcoming “playbook” for human services agencies to respond to future public health emergencies, disasters, and other crises
Selected Priority Area: Safety Net Coordination

Interagency Council on Economic Mobility

- Coordinate HHS-led Interagency Council on Economic Mobility
  - An interagency structure for coordination across federal programs that support economic mobility, to address federal barriers that no one agency can solve alone
  - HHS is the chair; USDA, ED, HUD, DOL, Treasury, SSA, OMB, and CEA are members
  - Senior career leadership from Council agencies
  - New Racial Equity Sprint Working Group tasked with identifying interagency options for advancing racial equity
  - Coordination within HHS through the Economic Mobility Partnership Team (ACF, ACL, ASPE, ASPR, CMS, HRSA, IEA, and SAMHSA)
  - Helping to implement COVID Economic Relief Executive Order

- Research and analysis on program alignment, including special focus on reducing the economic risk of program cliffs
Selected Priority Area: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access

- **Lived Experience**
  - What do we know about effectively engaging individuals with lived experience at the federal level in ways that impact policy outcomes?
  - Can we share decision-making power at the federal level?

- **Social Capital**
  - Projects to identify and disseminate emerging practices for using and measuring social capital to strengthen human services programs.

- **Equity Assessments**
  - Implementation of Executive Orders that require agencies to bring an equity lens to all facets of operations and policymaking.

- **Research Center on Poverty and Economic Mobility**
  - Cooperative agreement with the University of Wisconsin-Madison’s Institute for Research on Poverty.
Recap: Intersections and Opportunities for Community Psychologists

- Social capital
  - Peer supports

- Lived experience
  - Participatory Action Research

- Place-based initiatives
  - Community-level measures and data

- Primary prevention
  - Root cause analysis
ASK ME ANYTHING!

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