

Name: Melissa Strompolis, MA

Location: Columbia, SC

Name of workplace: Children's Trust of South Carolina; UNC-Charlotte

Title: Coordinator of Impact Assessment and Evaluation; Doctoral Candidate

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Website (personal or workplace): www.scchildren.org; <http://healthpsych.uncc.edu/program-tracks/community/trainingincommunitypsychology>

Please describe your primary workplace and role: In my full-time job at Children's Trust of South Carolina I manage our data, research, and evaluation efforts. Children's Trust is a data resource for many community members, legislators, and private and public agencies throughout South Carolina. As a funder we also evaluate all of our programs and engage in many research and policy related projects. I am also enrolled part-time at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. I have completed all of my coursework and am working on finishing my dissertation (advocacy evaluation).

Please describe any work you do related to public policy (paid or voluntary): In my current position, I work closely with our government and policy liaison on several state-level policy and advocacy related projects. One of our biggest priorities for the next legislative session is to pass several policies to improve the early care and education system in South Carolina (www.scchildren.org/commonagenda). In August of 2014 I began serving as the chair of SCRA's public policy committee. In that role, I facilitate our monthly meetings, review and assist with rapid response proposals and policy position statements, supervise practicum students, and manage the policy grants. As a recipient of the SCRA public policy grant, I have worked to assess advocacy capacities of our local Safe Kids coalition and to assess the impact of advocacy efforts on our legislators (this involved a survey and in-person interviews with legislators). Finally, I am working with Children First/Communities in Schools in Buncombe County, North Carolina to increase their advocacy effectiveness and ability to affect policy changes.

What training/education do you have in community psychology? How has this training contributed to your work in public policy? I am currently enrolled the Community Health Psychology doctoral program at UNC-Charlotte. Through the program's interdisciplinary course requirements I have completed a graduate certificate in the political science/public administration department and completed an internship at an organization that does work in advocacy and public policy. I have also participated in the policy pre-conference workshops at the SCRA biennial. These have given me both educational and real-world experiences in public policy.

What other training or experiences helped prepare you for your work in public policy? I completed a policy-related practicum with the Council for Children's Rights in Charlotte, North Carolina.

What advice might you give to students and others thinking about working in public policy? Join SCRA's Policy Committee! There are great opportunities (including writing policy papers, encouraging advocacy, and practicums for students) to talk and work with other community psychologists who have been doing public policy work for many years. Also, find internships or practica at organizations that actively engage in public policy and take classes in other departments (or in your own if they are offered) on public policy.

Is there anything else you would like to say about your involvement in public policy?

Please list any professional affiliations that relate to your involvement in public policy.

Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues

Joint Council and Legislative Committee on Children (South Carolina)

Joint Council on Children and Adolescents (South Carolina)