Washington, D.C. may call to mind presidents, monuments, memorials, Republicans, Democrats and the Supreme Court, but you might be surprised to find the city isn’t the stuffy political town it once was. Trendier than ever, the District is becoming an exciting East Coast vacation destination – and not just for patriots. Although government still commands center stage, D.C. also offers a host of renowned museums and interesting neighborhoods for shopping and strolling.

The vibrant city attracts nearly 20 million visitors a year, who come to explore the more traditional sites like the Washington Monument or the Lincoln and Jefferson memorials, and the National Mall’s free Smithsonian museums, including the Natural History Museum and Sculpture Garden. In the evenings, they unwind as Washingtonians do at one of the city’s many trendy bars before dancing in Adams Morgan or catching a live performance at the Kennedy Center.

As the capital of the world’s most powerful democracy, it is ironic that residents of Washington lack full self government. Representation in Congress is limited to a non-voting delegate to the House of Representatives and a shadow Senator. The 1964 presidential election was the first time D.C. residents were able to vote. While elected and appointed officials come and go, giving the city its reputation as a transient community, many residents have called Washington home for multiple generations. Their stories give Washington its distinctive character as both a national and local city.
For children, childhood is a time for building the foundations for future development. For policymakers, it is a time for improving the odds that children receive the health care, positive learning experiences and nurturing parenting that will support their healthy development and school readiness. Federal, state and local government, communities and parents all share in the responsibility of ensuring these early experiences provide children—especially those at-risk—everything they need to thrive and succeed in life now and into their adolescent years.

The University of Southern California School of Social Work offers a national immersion program in Los Angeles and Washington, D.C. for students interested in understanding government’s role in child development policy and the ways in which political agendas are set. The immersion will enlighten participants on the cornerstone of the policy process, including how legislation is proposed and enacted, the roles of advocacy and lobbying organizations, and the challenges of policy implementation and evaluation. Students will also gain insight about creating a game plan with tools they can use to influence the process and build networks with Southern California and Washington-based professional and policy organizations that can impact decisions locally. Additionally, students will have an opportunity to explore career options available in our nation’s capital and enjoy its iconic monuments, museums, historic sites and attractions.

**WHAT STUDENTS WILL GAIN**

- An understanding of the policy process, including how legislation is proposed and enacted, the roles of advocacy and lobbying organizations, and the challenges of policy implementation and evaluation.
- Knowledge of how federal legislation and policies affect programs for children and families at the local level.
- Insight into the importance (and limitations) of basic research and program evaluation in the development of social policies and the critical value of such evidence in social policy briefs and other written documents.
- An opportunity to become more effective advocates in social work practice.

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**Will I get credit for the program?**
If you are enrolled in the USC School of Social Work, you will receive 3-unit credits for completing the program.

**What if I am taking 15 units of credit during the spring semester?**
If you are a student in the USC School of Social Work and are enrolled in 15 units during the spring semester, you will not need to pay additional tuition for the required 3-unit course.

**Will this program help my chances of finding a job?**
Opportunities for federal employment will continue to grow in the coming years as large numbers of federal employees retire. The program will expose students to employment opportunities not only within federal agencies located in Washington, D.C., but Southern California as well.

**Is financial aid available?**
If you are receiving or are eligible for financial aid, you may be able to apply it toward this program. For details, contact the School of Social Work’s Financial Aid Office.

**What is the weather like in Washington, D.C.?**
Springtime weather in Washington varies from cooler evenings to slightly warmer daytime temperatures. Periodic rain and sometimes snow showers can be expected.

**What do I pack?**
Washington is generally more formal in dress. However, business casual and light, but warm, clothing is acceptable. You may also want to bring a sweater, jacket or light overcoat for the evenings. Please note airline baggage requirements may change, so it is important that you check with your airline regarding baggage allowances. You may be charged additional baggage fees.

For additional information about the program, please contact:

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**PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

**Academics**

- **Format:** The Child Development and Social Policy immersion program will primarily take place in Washington during USC’s spring recess, with students also participating in five classes in Los Angeles prior to and following the Washington segment, totaling 15 hours of class time. Sessions in Los Angeles will focus on the processes of developing and implementing social policy affecting children. The six days in Washington will consist of (1) site visits to Congress, government agencies and policy/advocacy organizations; (2) seminars in USC’s Washington office, which will include guests from government agencies and non-profit policy organizations, and social work faculty in Los Angeles (via video conferencing); and (3) a one-hour session for discussion and reflection on the day’s experiences with time set aside for journal writing.

- **Participants:** The program is designed for a limited number of graduate-level social work students on a first-come, first-served basis. Prospective participants are encouraged to attend at least one informational meeting to become familiar with the expectations and logistics of this one-of-a-kind experience.

- **Accommodations:** USC will arrange housing at a hotel in Washington, D.C.

- **Costs:** Program costs include six nights of accommodations (double-room occupancy), daily breakfast, weekday lunches, local transportation during program hours and field excursions during the Washington segment. In addition, costs include a program administrative fee. Other fees are additional, including tuition for a required 3-unit course and a health insurance policy if not enrolled in the mandatory USC student health insurance plan. All participants will be responsible for their own round-trip airfare from Los Angeles to Washington, dinners, weekend lunches, non-program-related transportation, and other incidentals.

**WHAT STUDENTS WILL GAIN**

- An understanding of the policy process, including how legislation is proposed and enacted, the roles of advocacy and lobbying organizations, and the challenges of policy implementation and evaluation.
- Knowledge of how federal legislation and policies affect programs for children and families at the local level.
- Insight into the importance (and limitations) of basic research and program evaluation in the development of social policies and the critical value of such evidence in social policy briefs and other written documents.
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**APPLICATION**

**Contact Information**

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**Child Development and Social Policy**

Los Angeles and
Washington, D.C.