



The Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. Foundation 2026 Public Policy Fellowship

The Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. Foundation Public Policy Fellowship is a one-year, full-time, intensive experience in Washington, D.C. We seek an exemplary professional, and/or a person with a disability, or a family member of someone with intellectual or developmental disabilities (IDD) to serve as a 2026 Public Policy Fellow in Washington, DC.

Since its founding in 1946, the Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. Foundation has supported the creation of practical programs to benefit persons with IDD, their families and their communities. The Foundation has always worked with national leaders who understand both the promise and challenges of the U.S. system of government. The need for skilled leadership in government, in organizations providing services and supports for people with IDD, and in public policy advocacy has never been greater. In response to this need, the Foundation initiated the Public Policy Fellowship Program in 1980. Fellows receive first-hand knowledge and experience in the development of public policy and the opportunity for professional development and other learning opportunities.

Each year the Foundation brings talented and accomplished professionals, family members (many of whom are both professionals and family members) and persons with a disability to Washington, D.C. for a full year where they actively participate in public policy development in the offices of a Member of Congress, Congressional committees, or on rare occasions, federal agencies. Former Public Policy Fellows describe the Fellowship as a major turning point in their professional and personal lives. The experience is a unique chance to understand the intersection of public policy, disability advocacy, and the political process and to establish connections with the broader community of disability advocates and policy makers.

The purpose of the Fellowship is to prepare emerging leaders to assume leadership roles in the public policy arena at the state and/or national levels. During this one-year Fellowship, the successful applicant will learn how federal legislation is initiated, developed, and passed by Congress, as well as how programs are administered and regulations promulgated by federal agencies. Fellows also learn how disability organizations work to shape public policy affecting people with disabilities and their families.

Key issues in 2026 may include health care reforms, public health and scientific research infrastructure, and many briefings and hearings, all impacting the quality of life for individuals with IDD, and for their families.

The successful applicant's background will include distinguished involvement in efforts to improve the lives of people with IDD at the local, regional, state, or national level. Successful applicants will have demonstrated outstanding experience and accomplishment in at least one of the following areas:

1. State or national level advocacy for persons with IDD and their families;
2. Health care, mental health care, employment, education, childcare, child welfare, housing, transportation, or home and community-based services for people with IDD;
4. Development of training programs for people with disabilities, families and communities and/or for the professionals who work with and for them;
5. Development or improvements of family support services, programs focused on increasing individual's control of resources and decisions impacting their lives, technology in support of people with IDD and any other area of focus important to these Americans.
6. Conducting research that improves or validates services that improved the quality of lives for people with intellectual disabilities and their families.
7. Enhancing the empowerment and influence of people IDD through organized efforts and programs.

The expectation is that fellows will become future leaders in the area of disability policy. After their year in Washington D.C., the Foundation expects former Kennedy Fellows will make significant contributions to policy and program development at the state or national level.

The program provides an intensive one-year full-time exposure to the federal public policy making process and includes a stipend and modest relocation expenses. Selected fellows must be prepared to live in the Washington, D.C. area full-time and work in-person during their fellowship year and to devote themselves full-time to the fellowship.

Application process and guidelines:

Applicants should submit a letter of application in word or PDF form between 2 to **no more than** 4 pages in length, single spaced in 12-point font with 1-inch margins, stating their background and history in the field of services and supports to people with IDD, interests and accomplishments to date, as well as what they hope to do with the knowledge and experience gained from the fellowship. They should also attach either a résumé detailing their work and educational experience or a summary of their involvement in the field along with three letters of support from people familiar with their work. Applications should clearly show the candidate's name, address, telephone number(s), and e-mail address on the first page.

Applicants must be U.S. resident to participate in the program. If an applicant needs accommodations to complete the application, please reach out to Eidelman@jpkf.org.

APPLICATION

The sole method of application, including letters of support and résumé submission is via an online system that is located at <https://www.aucd.org/app/jpkffellowship2026>

Hard copies will not be accepted!

Letters of support must be submitted with the application via a PDF file or a word file. Please make sure that each letter clearly specifies the candidate for which the letter is being submitted.

The application deadline for the 2026 fellowship is January 31, 2026 by 5:00 P.M. EST

The Fellowship starting date will be negotiated with the successful applicant(s). The Foundation fellowship will be awarded for the period beginning as early as March 2026 and as late at September 2026 and running for one year, with the actual schedule subject to negotiation between the successful applicant and the Foundation.

Finalists will be invited to Washington in the Spring of 2026 to be interviewed by a distinguished panel of national Public Policy experts.

Should you have any questions please contact Steven M. Eidelman - Eidelman@jpkf.org
Applications will only be accepted online at: <https://www.aucd.org/app/jpkffellowship2026>
Please do not send paper copies to the Foundation.

Questions? Please contact Steven M. Eidelman Eidelman@jpkf.org

Address letters of application to:
Public Policy Fellowship
The Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. Foundation

Please Note: NO hard copies will be accepted!