

Opportunities for the Prevention of Child Maltreatment, NIMH

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In 1996, the Appropriations Committees of both the House and the Senate requested that the National Institutes of Health (NIH) within the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) convene a working group of its component organizations, supporting research on child abuse and neglect to (1) assess the state-of-the-science, (2) make recommendations for a research agenda, and (3) develop plans for future coordination efforts at NIH. Accordingly, NIH established the NIH Child Abuse and Neglect Working Group (CANWG), with representatives from the major research institutes and offices supporting research in this area.

NIMH was designated as the lead institute for the working group and continues to draw upon its April 1997 blueprint for action to develop the child abuse and neglect area. The NIH CANWG has continued regular monthly meetings with an increasing number of involved NIH institutes, as well as met with other federal partners within the Department of Education, the Department of Justice, and the Children's Bureau of the Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS). Dr. Cheryl A. Boyce (NIMH) cochairs and convenes the NIH CANWG along with Dr. Margaret Feerick (NICHD).

As a result of interagency collaborations, as well as outside continuing consultation and input from researchers, professional organizations, and advocacy groups, several major initiatives have been implemented with NIMH as the lead or cosponsor on the majority of these activities. Of all research areas of child maltreatment, the child neglect area has received the least systematic research attention, despite the fact that child neglect is the most frequently reported type of maltreatment, particularly in the early years of life.

NIMH organized and cosponsored a request for applications and a subsequent program announcement, entitled "Research on Child Neglect," with multiple NIH institutes (including the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS), and National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research (NIDCR), the NIH Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (OBSSR); the Children's Bureau, the U.S. DHHS; Office of Special Education, U.S. Department of Education; and the U.S. Department of Justice). These announcements have successfully funded 19 research projects

to date and created the Federal Child Neglect Research Consortium, chaired by Dr. Boyce. NIMH is the primary funding institute for five of these projects and cofunds several others (see <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/canwg/cangrantees1.cfm> for abstracts).

Following a series of conferences and presentations on developing new child abuse and neglect investigators, several NIH institutes cosponsored an ongoing program announcement (PA) for research career awards in child abuse and neglect to increase the number of researchers in this fragile, underdeveloped area (see <http://grants1.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PA-99-133.html> for the current announcement). NIMH has funded several successful career awards in child abuse and neglect. For example, one mentored career award investigator in child maltreatment has now received two innovative investigator-initiated research grants (R01s) on the psychobiological aspects of child abuse and neglect. Other career awardees and new research investigators have successfully developed intervention development grants (R21s). In collaboration with NICHD, NIDA, and the Children's Bureau, NIMH has also participated in efforts to increase the accuracy, reliability, and validity of definitions and classifications used in child abuse and neglect research through meetings with experts in the fields of child maltreatment, physical injuries, and data classification systems. Most recently, NIMH cosponsored a meeting on inflicted head trauma in childhood with NICHD.

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Research on the prevention of the biological and behavioral effects of child abuse and neglect is encouraged through traditional research grants such as R01s, and through research training programs and grant support of scientific meetings. The Congress applauded the NIH CANWG for its efforts in fiscal year 2003 appropriation hearings and encouraged NIH to "proceed at a high level of attention with addressing the research agenda." NIMH has continued to serve as the lead institute to achieve the goals of the research agenda with great success and enthusiasm from the research field as well as professional and advocacy groups.

Please see <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/canwg/canwgsum.cfm> for a full listing of specific opportunities and resources from the NIH CANWG, www.nimh.nih.gov for information on NIMH, and www.nih.gov for information on NIH opportunities, including support of the scientific meetings and research grants that are briefly mentioned above.