

**Institute for the
Advancement
of Social Work Research**

*Connecting Policy, Practice,
and Education Through
Advancement of Research*

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Social Work Research Recommendations for the NIH Transition Team

Submitted January 5, 2009 via email to francis.collins@gmail.com

“Social work research as it relates to the health of individuals sheds light on the behavioral and social determinants of wellness and disease and helps to develop effective interventions for improving health outcomes.” – NIH Plan for Social Work Research, May 2003

The **Institute for the Advancement of Social Work Research (IASWR)** is pleased to provide recommendations regarding *Transition Priorities* for the National Institutes of Health (NIH). These derive from the perspective of social work researchers and our active participation as part of the behavioral and social sciences research community. Social work research cuts across diseases, age cohorts and service delivery settings, enhancing psychosocial well-being, and examining prevention and treatment of acute and chronic disorders. It addresses clinical, services, policy, organizational and system issues, addressing needs of individuals, families, communities, organizations and service systems.

RECOMMENDATIONS

SELECT AN NIH DIRECTOR THAT RECOGNIZES THE INTEGRAL ROLE OF BEHAVIORAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH WITHIN THE MISSION OF THE NIH.

The health of our nation depends on a robust portfolio of behavioral and social sciences research across NIH institutes and offices, and strong leadership by the NIH Director and the Director of the Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (OBSSR) to support such research and to disseminate and communicate findings.

CONTINUE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE NIH PLAN FOR SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH ([HTTP://OBSSR.OD.NIH.GOV/PDF/SWR_REPORT.PDF](http://obssr.od.nih.gov/pdf/swr_report.pdf)).

In 2003, at the request of Congress, NIH developed a plan to enhance social work research opportunities. Progress has been made, however, tight funding at NIH over the past several years has curtailed support for well-reviewed grants and cut critical funding for researcher training. Expansion of training and mentorship for social work doctoral students, post doctoral fellows and early career researchers continues to be needed. Increasing the involvement of social work researchers on review panels, advisory group and workgroups is also critically important.

IASWR appreciates NIH's on-going investments and the dedication of the trans-NIH social work research working group. We look forward to working together to continue fulfilling the Plan's recommendations, including planning the NIH-sponsored symposium to showcase social work research findings for 2009.

EXPAND RESEARCH TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES TO BUILD A DIVERSE SCIENTIFIC WORKFORCE.

*NIH should expand its focus on research training, especially to ensure that there is a diverse scientific workforce across areas of science, including behavioral and social sciences research. Strategies should include working closely with professional associations and scientific societies; creating initiatives to support science career development at the undergraduate and graduate levels, and supporting mentorship and networking opportunities to reduce isolation and build supportive communities of researchers. For more information see **Enhancing Diversity in Science** (http://www.cossa.org/diversity/Enhancing_Diversity_in_Science.pdf).*

ENSURE THAT TRANSLATIONAL SCIENCE INCLUDES SUFFICIENT ATTENTION TO IMPLEMENTATION OF DISCOVERIES INTO REAL WORLD SETTINGS, RECOGNIZING THE IMPORTANCE OF UNDERSTANDING AND ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF DIVERSE COMMUNITIES, AND STUDYING ISSUES RELATED TO COSTS, ACCESS, RESOURCES, ADHERENCE, WORKFORCE CAPACITIES AND ISSUES OF ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES.

To enhance the health of our nation, and deal with acute and chronic diseases, there needs to be connections between genetic, molecular, pharmacological, technological and biological discoveries and the individuals and communities at risk for and/or manifesting these health conditions.

ABOUT THE INSTITUTE FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH

The IASWR was created in 1993 as a 501 C-3 organization based in Washington, DC. It receives core support from the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), the National Association of Deans and Directors of Schools of Social Work (NADD), the Society for Social Work and Research (SSWR), the Association of Baccalaureate Social Work Program Directors (BPD), the Group for the Advancement of Doctoral Education (GADE) and the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). It also receives grants and contracts from government agencies, private organizations and foundations.

IASWR's mission is to advance the scientific knowledge base of social work practice by enhancing the research capacity of the profession; by promoting the use of research to improve practice, program development and policy; and by strengthening the voice of the profession in public education and public policy determinations to ensure that social work is represented in the national scientific community.

IASWR fulfills this mission through expanding opportunities for social work research, preparing social work researchers, disseminating findings to inform policy and practice, by representing the profession in the national scientific community and by establishing linkages with other related disciplines.

IASWR works closely with its sister social work organizations to develop training and technical assistance workshops to expand research capacity, connect research findings to practice and policy and to promote evidence-based practice. Each January, the SSWR hosts an annual conference with over 1000 participants, highlighting research findings and promoting methodological rigor (see <http://www.sswr.org/conferences.php>). At this event, IASWR organizes a Pre-Conference Institute that involves representatives from several NIH institutes who provide valuable information about funding opportunities and funding strategies to doctoral students, early career and senior researchers.

IASWR issues a weekly e-alert service, *IASWR Listserv Announcements* and maintains a website (www.iaswresearch.org) with resource information on applying for research grants, resources on evidence-based practice and reports and publications related to research agenda setting.

IASWR also maintains a database of social work researchers funded by the National Institutes of Health. Between 2005 and 2007 there were more than 90 grants awarded by NIH to social work researchers. The directory can be found at www.iaswresearch.org.

For more information contact:

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