



## DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH &amp; HUMAN SERVICES

Public Health Service

National Institutes of Health  
Bethesda, Maryland 20892[www.nih.gov](http://www.nih.gov)

OCT 29 2009

The Honorable Daniel Inouye  
United States Senate  
722 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510-1102

Dear Senator Inouye:

Thank you for your September 23 letter expressing support for the National Institutes of Health's (NIH) efforts to advance basic behavioral research. Just as basic biological research provides the foundation for new pharmaceuticals and medical therapies, basic behavioral and social sciences research paves the way for new methods to reduce risk behaviors such as smoking and drug use, to improve adherence to medical advice, and to make our environments healthier. In fiscal year (FY) 2008, the NIH provided over \$1 billion to support basic research in the behavioral and social sciences, about one-third of its total \$3.2 billion investment in behavioral and social sciences research.

In early October, we added to these investments by launching a new NIH-wide initiative to accelerate and expand basic behavioral and social sciences research. The Basic Behavioral and Social Science Opportunity Network (OppNet) embodies the understanding that our Institutes and Centers (ICs) share the mission to support basic behavioral and social sciences research. Following a model similar to that of the NIH Blueprint for Neuroscience Research, OppNet will identify common IC interests in the basic behavioral and social sciences and support new research through targeted initiatives. Twenty-four ICs and four program offices within the Office of the Director (OD) will collaborate on new research initiatives supported through a pool of common funds. The enclosure lists the participating ICs and OD offices.

Drs. Jeremy Berg of the National Institute of General Medical Sciences and Richard Hodes of the National Institute on Aging are leading the Steering Committee of IC Directors providing direction to OppNet. Scientists representing the participating ICs and Offices have begun implementing OppNet activities through a Coordinating Committee and working groups. The NIH Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (OBSSR) is also playing a leadership role: the Director of OBSSR serves as a co-chair of the OppNet Coordinating Committee and one OBSSR staff member is dedicated to facilitating and supporting OppNet activities.

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In its first year (FY 2010), we have designated \$10 million from American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funding for OppNet activities. In keeping with the Recovery Act's goals, initial activities will focus on short-term research and/or training. These funds will be targeted towards strengthening basic behavioral and social sciences within existing research programs and developing capacity for interdisciplinary research. We will release the first OppNet funding opportunity announcements by the end of calendar year 2009.

We expect OppNet to grow to approximately \$20 million in FY 2011 and to approximately \$30 million in FYs 2012 through 2014. These funds will be provided from IC base appropriations. During its first year, OppNet will develop a plan for multi-year programs to be implemented beginning in FY 2011. These programs will target activities that have the potential to transform basic behavioral and social sciences on topics relevant to multiple ICs.

OppNet promises to enhance our investment in basic behavioral and social sciences research, not only through increased funding, but also by making a concerted effort to identify and address scientific opportunities in this critical area of the NIH mission. Through improved communication and collaboration among ICs and Offices, this new initiative will contribute to strengthening the basic science foundations that underlie the development of interventions to improve health.

I am grateful for your encouragement in these efforts and would be pleased to answer any additional questions related to the OppNet program or other NIH activities. I look forward to working with you to advance our shared commitment to improving our Nation's health.

Sincerely yours,



Francis S. Collins, M.D., Ph.D.  
Director

Enclosure

**Institutes and Centers Participating in the  
NIH Behavioral and Social Science Opportunity Network (OppNet)**

1. National Cancer Institute (NCI)
2. National Eye Institute (NEI)
3. National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI)
4. National Human Genome Research Institute (NHGRI)
5. National Institute on Aging (NIA)
6. National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA)
7. National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID)
8. National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases (NIAMS)
9. National Institute of Biomedical Imaging and Bioengineering (NIBIB)
10. *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD)
11. National Institute on Deafness and other Communication Disorders (NIDCD)
12. National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research (NIDCR)
13. National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK)
14. National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)
15. National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS)
16. National Institute of General Medical Sciences (NIGMS)
17. National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)
18. National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS)
19. National Institute of Nursing Research (NINR)
20. National Library of Medicine (NLM)
21. John E. Fogarty International Center (FIC)
22. National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM)
23. National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NCMHD)
24. National Center for Research Resources (NCRR)
25. NIH Office of the Director
  - a. The Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (OBSSR)
  - b. The Office of Dietary Supplements (ODS)
  - c. The Office of Disease Prevention (ODP)
  - d. The Office of AIDS Research (OAR)