

Minority Youth Research

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It is very exciting to be involved with the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH) at a time when we are launching a major behavioral research initiative. In the summer of 1991, the NIH proposed a minority health behavior initiative which was then announced by Secretary Sullivan as part of the NIH Office of Minority Program health initiative.

This initiative (RFA-OD-92-01) represents an opportunity to bring together health behavior interests across the NIH. The initiative calls for research in the context of interventions and evaluations. We hope it will encourage innovative alliances between researchers and health providers.

While the initiative requires applicants to address certain identified health issues, the expectation is that researchers will put together a broad health behavior initiative appropriate for their community. We hear the complaint that intervention or research programs are too categorical and do not address the broad interconnections of different behaviors. We hope the scientific community will find this integrative opportunity as appealing as we do.

The Minority Youth Health Behavior initiative is only one of those the Institute is involved in that would provide an opportunity for APS members. Upcoming initiatives will address the need for normative behavior studies among minority populations. In addition, we anticipate calls for research on topics related to the family, child wellbeing, and child self-care. These research areas are an extension of our ongoing interest in minority health and development, along with our focus on child outcomes.

As a social demographer, I find the breadth of the Institute especially appealing. We are the only Institute with a specific focus on healthy development. The need for behavioral research can be found in many of the extramural programs of the Institute — the Human Learning and Behavior branch, the Demographic and Behavioral Sciences branch, the Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities branch, and the new National Center for Medical Rehabilitation Research. The APS reaches many scientists who address issues of interest to the Institute.

I hope this column will serve as the beginning of a dialogue about the behavioral research program at NICHD.