

Draft Proposal

5/10/2023

TCMHCC New and Emerging Children's Mental Health Researchers Initiative

Introduction

The Texas Child Mental Health Care Consortium as part of its efforts to enhance mental health research and expertise in Texas will establish the New and Emerging Children's Mental Health Researchers (NECMHR) initiative through funding provided by the 88th Texas Legislature. This document outlines the basic structure and purpose of this initiative.

Background

The Texas Child Mental Health Care Consortium (Consortium) was established by the 86th Texas Legislature to combine the expertise of the State's 12 academic health related institutions to increase access to children's mental health care and promote evidence-based children's mental health practices.

One means of accomplishing this goal is to build the infrastructure for academic institutions to better conduct mental health research, with a special focus on coordinated research projects across TCMHCC institutions. In Rider 58 from HB1 in the 86th Texas Legislative session, the Consortium is charged with promoting and coordinating mental health research across state university systems in accordance with the statewide behavioral health strategic plan.

The Consortium has developed a novel approach that enables the enrollment of children and youth from across the state to participate in coordinated research projects designed to reduce the impact of childhood mental illness on Texas's youngest citizens and their families. The Consortium considers the legislatively funded research projects as a catalyst to:

- further the State's ability to leverage additional future children's mental health research funding from national, state, and local organizations; and
- promote the use of evidence-based practices to prevent and treat childhood mental illness.

Thus far the Consortium has focused on developing two large Consortium wide research initiatives focused on trauma and depression. As a next step in the development of this research capacity among Consortium institutions, the Consortium proposes to invest in junior investigators (individuals at the rank of Assistant Professor and below) based at their institutions who have not secured and RO1 NIH grant previously.

This initiative will focus on advancing the knowledge and evidence base in the prevention and treatment of childhood mental illness. Once promising and evidence-informed practices are identified, findings will be disseminated to inform providers, policy makers, advocates, and

families about specific types of treatment approaches that can minimize the symptoms of childhood mental illness, promote recovery, and help all Texas children thrive.

The New and Emerging Children's Mental Health Researchers Initiative

NECMHR is designed to foster and encourage junior researchers at TCMHCC institutions so that they can compete and secure extramural funding focused on improving the mental health system of care in Texas.

If funding is made available by the legislature during the Texas 88th Legislative session, these funds will be made available to TCMHCC institutions starting in fiscal year 2024.

Basic Preliminary Guidelines Regarding Funding:

- 1) Proposals will be focused on research topics identified by the Texas HHSC in partnership with the TCMHCC executive committee.
 - a. All proposals must focus on improving the mental health system and services in Texas.
 - b. Basic research and drug studies are not eligible for funding.
- 2) Proposals will be accepted only from TCMHCC institutions.
 - a. All principal investigators must be based at a TCMHCC institution, but they may partner with Texas based investigators at non-TCMHCC institution as needed.
- 3) Principle investigators at the rank of assistant professor or below will be given priority for funding.
- 4) In an effort to enhance research collaboration, proposals that include more than one TCMHCC institution are encouraged.
- 5) An independent peer review committee consisting of researchers based outside the state of Texas will review and score each proposal.
 - a. The Consortium's Executive Committee will appoint the peer review committee through an application process open to experienced children's mental health researchers from across the United States.
 - b. The peer review committee will review the research proposals and make recommendations for funding to the TCMHCC executive committee.
 - c. The TCMHCC has final decision-making authority in awarding grants and may consider other factors besides the score from the peer review committee in awarding funding. Other considerations may include ensuring the diversity of institutions funded and research priorities of the TCMHCC.
 - d. Peer review committee members may be appropriately reimbursed for their time and effort serving as a member of the committee.
- 6) Proposals are expected to be one-time initiatives that can be completed within two years and should serve as the basis to obtain extramural funding from federal or other sources in the future. An assessment of future research funds derived from the NECMHR program will be conducted every two years.

- 7) Total costs will be limited to \$250,000 per year, or \$500,000 for the duration of the proposal.
- 8) Principle investigators must dedicate between 25% and 50% of their time and effort for the completion of the proposal.
- 9) Indirect costs for proposals will be limited to 15%.

The NECMHR Mentoring Program

- a. All PIs must identify an experienced [d](#) mental health research mentor through the duration of the project.
- b. The primary mentor must be members of a TCMHCC institution but does not have work at the same institution as the principal investigator.
- c. All selected NECMHR investigators will convene together twice a year for peer-to-peer learning and additional mentoring.
 - i. Cost for this travel can be covered by the grant or through other institutional funding.
- d. Up to 5% of the funds in every award may be used to offset the time and effort of the mentor.