

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 (TCMHCC) 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 primarily in junior faculty and fellows who have not previously been a principal investigator on an individual R-01 an NIH grant.

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.

Purpose

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

Preliminary Guidelines for NECMHR:

- 1) Proposals will be focused on research topics identified by the Texas HHSC in partnership with the TCMHCC executive committee.
 - a. Proposals must focus on improving the mental health system and services in Texas. This may include gaining an understanding of the causes of childhood psychiatric disorders.
 - b. Basic bench research and pharmaceutical clinical trials are not eligible for funding.
 - c. Proposals are expected to be one-time initiatives that will be completed within two years and should serve as the basis to obtain extramural funding from federal or other sources in the future.
- 2) Eligibility Criteria
 - a. Applicants must currently work for a TCMHCC institution.
 - b. Principal investigators may partner with Texas based investigators at non-TCMHCC institutions as needed.
 - c. Applicants who have never been an NIH R-01 grant principal investigator and are at the rank of associate professor and below will be prioritized for funding.
 - d. Trainees including clinical and research fellows are eligible and encouraged to apply.
 - e. Principal investigators must dedicate between 25% and 50% of their effort to the proposal.
 - f. Proposals that include more than one TCMHCC institution are encouraged.
- 3) Funding levels
 - a. Research Career Development Awards: (\$100,000 per year for salary and \$50,000 per year for their project (a total of \$300,000 for the duration of the proposal).
 - b. Research Project Grants: Applicants currently holding a faculty position at a TCMHCC institution are eligible for up to \$250,000 per year (\$500,000 for the duration of the proposal).
 - c. Post-doctoral Fellows and Trainees. Applicants that are currently trainees at a TCMHCC institution are eligible for up to \$75,000 per year (\$150,000 for the duration of the proposal).
 - d. Indirect costs for proposals will be limited to 15%.

- e. Mentors can receive up to 5% salary support, up to the NIH salary cap.

4) Selection Process

- a. An independent peer review committee consisting of researchers based outside the state of Texas will review and score each proposal.
 - i. The Consortium's Executive Committee will appoint the peer review committee consisting of experienced children's and adolescent's mental health researchers from across the United States.
 - ii. The peer review committee will develop review criteria that prioritizes the qualifications and research potential of the candidates in addition to the research proposal.
 - iii. The peer review committee will review the candidates and research proposals and make recommendations for funding to the TCMHCC executive committee.
 - iv. Peer review committee members may be appropriately reimbursed for their time and effort serving as a member of the committee.
- b. The TCMHCC executive committee 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.
- c. The TCMHCC executive committee will make the final decision regarding the balance between the number of trainees and the number of faculty selected for funding.
- d. Demonstrated financial commitment by the supporting institution for dedicated research time for the applicant can be considered in funding decisions.

5) The NECMHR Mentoring Program

- a) All principal investigators must identify an experienced mental health research mentor throughout the duration of the project.
- b) The primary mentor must be a member of a TCMHCC institution but does not have work at the same institution as the principal investigator.
- c) All selected NECMHR investigators will convene twice a year for peer-to-peer learning and additional mentoring.
- d) The cost of this travel can be covered by the grant or through other institutional funding.
- e) Mentors can receive up to 5% salary support, up to the NIH salary cap.