



## The Need to Strengthen NIH Support for Pediatric Researchers

Recent and ongoing changes at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) have reduced the impact of some longstanding programs that support the development of early-career investigators focusing their careers in pediatric medical research. While Congress and the NIH have focused on the challenges associated with early-career investigators, a significant gap exists in pediatrics, as evidenced by trajectories in key training programs.

### Child Health Research Center Awards

The Child Health Research Center Awards<sup>1</sup> program began in 1990 to support early career researchers focusing in pediatrics. This award provides funding to leading academic pediatric programs that support multiple early-career investigators. The program focuses on researchers who completed their pediatric subspecialty training within the past four years and includes support for mentors and other training designed to help prepare the participants to be self-sustaining researchers able to win R01 or other types of awards. Unfortunately, **this program supports fewer than half of the number of young investigators supported earlier this decade.**

 YEAR	 # OF CENTERS FUNDED	 TOTAL # OF CENTERS	 TOTAL TRAINEES
2007	9	21	84
2010	6	21	84
2011	7	22	88
2012	6	19	76
<b>2015</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>36</b>

<sup>1</sup><http://tiny.cc/xvovez>

While NIH has focused some resources on other pediatric training activities, these efforts have not compensated for the sharp reduction (*nearly 60 percent*) of slots between 2011 and 2015.

## Pediatric Scientist Development Program

Another long-standing and successful program dating back to the mid-1980s is the **Pediatric Scientist Development Program (PSDP)**<sup>2</sup>. This program focuses on training early career physicians for careers in pediatric research, helping bridge the gap from research to clinical practice. Unfortunately, this program has also been subject to sizeable reductions. For several years, each participating site supported 17 early career researchers. However, under the most recent renewal (July 2018), total slots or researchers able to be supported per site fell to 10<sup>3</sup> or a reduction of 41 percent.



YEAR	# OF SLOTS/CENTER
2009	17
2010	17
2011	17
2012	17
2013	17
2014	17
2015	17
2016	17
2017	17
<b>2018</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>2019</b>	<b>10</b>

These data points underscore that additional support is necessary to develop a robust pediatric research workforce – including physician scientists – willing to commit to careers pursuing the next round of research breakthroughs and discoveries to benefit children. By authorizing a trans-NIH pediatric researcher training mechanism, Congress can help address these gaps and ensure we have the next generation of scientists able to develop novel therapies and treatments for children.

<sup>2</sup> <http://tiny.cc/j0oyez>

<sup>3</sup> <http://tiny.cc/w2oyez>