



American Foundation
for Suicide Prevention

***AFSP Policies
for
Postdoctoral Research Fellowships***

Effective March 30, 2010

1. REVIEW PROCESS

Research grants and fellowships are awarded by the AFSP Board of Directors acting on the recommendations of the Chair of the Scientific Council. Each application is reviewed independently by two AFSP Scientific Advisors, and subsequently by a member of the Research Grants Committee, who presents it to the full committee for discussion and prioritization. These are then acted on by the Scientific Council and Board of Directors of AFSP.

Applications are evaluated on the basis of (a) the potential of the research to contribute to the understanding and ultimate prevention of suicide, or to the treatment of suicidal patients, (b) the qualifications, experience and productivity of the applicant, (c) the facilities available to the applicant for the purpose of the study, and (d) the demonstrated availability of a sufficient number of patients or subjects to carry out the research.

In addition, the evaluation of Postdoctoral Research Fellowship applications will include consideration of the research training plan and the opportunities provided for the applicant to receive meaningful guidance in carrying out the proposed study and preparing for a career in suicide research.

2. SOURCE OF FUNDS

Funds used for all AFSP research grants and fellowships are obtained from private donations to the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention.

3. ELIGIBILITY AND CONDITIONS

a. Postdoctoral Research Fellowships grants are awarded to individuals who will be receiving training and conducting research at universities and other training institutions in the U.S. and abroad.

b. Fellowship applicants must have completed all requirements for a Ph.D., M.D., or other doctoral degree prior to the start date of the Postdoctoral Research Fellowship. Individuals who have three

or more academic years of postdoctoral research experience prior to the time the Postdoctoral Research Fellowship would begin are not eligible for this award.

c. An AFSP Postdoctoral Research Fellowship may not be held concurrently with any other Postdoctoral Fellowship. Additional funds may be secured by the Fellow to support costs associated with the research project.

d. Although it is the general policy of AFSP that individuals may be the Principal Investigator on only one AFSP grant at a time, individuals holding an AFSP Postdoctoral Research Fellowship are eligible to receive additional funds through an AFSP Pilot Grant to support costs associated with the research project (as distinct from salary support or the Institutional Allowance, as described below). Fellows may apply for a Pilot Grant at any point during the Fellowship period (See *AFSP Policies on Pilot Grants.*)

e. Recipients of the AFSP Postdoctoral Research Fellowship may not reapply for this award.

f. Personnel compensated in whole or in part through an AFSP research grant are not considered employees of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, but of the grantee institution. AFSP does not assume any responsibility for the conduct of the research or other acts of the investigators. AFSP grantees are subject to the ethical and scientific policies of the grantee institution.

4. DESCRIPTION OF FELLOWSHIP

a. Purpose

Postdoctoral Research Fellowships are training grants designed to enable young investigators to qualify for independent careers in suicide research. The training can be in either basic or clinical research and must be full-time; that is, Fellows are expected to devote at least 40 hours per week to the training program and may not have any significant clinical or other responsibilities during the funding period.

b. Mentoring

The application for a Postdoctoral Research Fellowship must be endorsed by the applicant's proposed mentor and by the head of the department in which the training will be received. Both a research proposal and a plan of training must be formulated and agreed upon by the mentor and the applicant, and described in detail in the application.

The mentor must have an academic rank of associate or full professor and an established record of suicide research and publication relevant to the applicant's proposed study. Individuals may serve as mentors for no more than two AFSP grantees at a time, whether Young Investigators or Postdoctoral Research Fellows.

c. Term of Fellowship

Postdoctoral Research Fellowships may be sought for a period of one or two years, with the second year contingent upon the first year's performance.

d. Requirements and Amount

The Postdoctoral Research Fellowship provides an annual stipend of \$42,000 in the first year, and \$46,000 in the second year (if applicable), plus an Institutional Allowance of \$6,000 per year. The annual stipend may be used *only* for compensation of the Fellow. Stipend payments for Postdoctoral Research Fellowships are made directly to the recipient institution. The institution may supplement the stipend to offset the cost of living, or may provide compensation in the form of salary or tuition reimbursement for such services as teaching or serving as a laboratory assistant. The conditions of stipend supplementation or compensation may not interfere with or detract from the Fellow's training program.

The Institutional Allowance may be used to defray such expenses as research supplies or equipment, health insurance for the Fellow and travel to scientific meetings.

e. Application Dates and Notifications

Applications for Postdoctoral Research Fellowships are considered once each year, and must be submitted by November 15th. Grants applied for by November 15th, if approved, may begin after July 1st of the following year.

Preliminary notification letters are sent to applicants after April 1st following review of applications by the Research Grants Committee. Final award letters are issued following review and approval by the Scientific Council, and in turn by the Board of Directors, at their May meeting.

5. APPLICATION

Applications for a Postdoctoral Research Fellowship must be submitted on the appropriate AFSP forms and must follow the format specified. Application forms can be downloaded from the AFSP website. Completed grant applications must be submitted electronically to grants@afsp.org. A compact disc (CD) containing the completed application and supplemental materials must also be submitted to the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, 120 Wall Street, 29th Floor, New York, NY 10005.

Care should be taken to comply with the page restrictions noted for each section of the application on the application forms. Material submitted that exceeds the specified maximum number of pages, or that is not specifically requested, may not be considered by the reviewers. The entire application should be typed using a font size no smaller than 11 point.

The application must include the following sections:

a. Cover Sheet. All requested information about the proposed project, applicant and institution must be provided, along with the signatures of the head of the applicant's department and the proposed mentor.

b. Principal Investigator Assurance Form. This form must be signed by the Principal Investigator, accepting responsibility for the conduct of the research in the event that a Fellowship award is made.

c. Abstract. The aims and expected outcomes of the proposed research project should be clearly stated in lay language.

d. Certification for Protection of Research Subjects.

Human Subjects: The proposed research should be submitted to the sponsoring institution's Institutional Review Board (IRB) no later than the date the application is submitted to AFSP. On the certification form, the applicant must indicate the current status of the IRB review. If the proposed research has already been approved by the IRB, the form should be signed by the appropriate official and submitted to AFSP. If the research has not been approved by the IRB at the time the application is submitted, this should be indicated by checking the appropriate statement on the form, and a copy of the signed form should be submitted following IRB approval. If a grant award is made by AFSP, no funds will be released until proof of IRB approval is received.

Animal Subjects: Institutions must implement the PHS Policy for all AFSP supported activities involving animals, and must ensure that any standards that might not be consistent with PHS Policy do not affect or pose risks to AFSP supported activities. A certification of approval from The Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) is required to be submitted prior to the funding of an application.

e. Budget. All requested information must be provided on the standard budget form, and the total amount requested for the first and second (if applicable) year of the Fellowship should be indicated. The budget must:

- State the applicant's name as Principal Investigator, the percentage of time that he/she will dedicate to the research project, and the stipend amount requested.
- Indicate the amount of the Institutional Allowance requested.

f. Budget Justification. The applicant's specific role and responsibilities in the proposed project should be described. The justification must also indicate how the Institutional Allowance will be allocated.

g. Biographical Information. The information

requested on the biographical form should be provided for the applicant and the proposed mentor. Use only the form provided in the AFSP application packet. *Do not provide full CVs.*

h. Project Description. This section of the application should provide sufficient detail to allow reviewers to evaluate the proposed methods and procedures. It must include a statement of the specific aims and hypotheses; a description of prior related work and the significance of the proposed study for the field; and a description of the data collection and analysis methods to be employed. The number of subjects and the power of the study should be indicated. *Explicit details need to be given substantiating the availability of the proposed number of patients or research subjects within the amount of time allocated for subject recruitment and enrollment. Additionally, if this proposal is analysis of data previously collected, the fidelity, currency and ability to access the data needs to be provided in the application.*

i. Project Timeline. The timeline should identify key project activities and the anticipated dates for their completion.

j. References. Provide complete citations for all literature cited in the Project Description.

k. Research Training Plan. Using the form in the application packet, the training plan should describe the applicant's training objectives and career goal, and all aspects of the training to be obtained during the Postdoctoral Research Fellowship period, including research, course work, teaching, clinical and other activities. *The evaluation of Postdoctoral Research Fellowship applications will include consideration of the adequacy of the research training plan in preparing the applicant for a career in suicide research.*

l. Recommendation of Mentor. Using the form in the application packet, the mentor should provide detailed information about his or her role in the proposed research project, and evaluate the applicant's qualifications to carry out the research and to pursue a research career. Specific information must be provided about the frequency

and nature of anticipated contacts with the applicant during the Fellowship period. *The evaluation of Postdoctoral Research Fellowship applications will include consideration of the mentoring plan and the opportunities provided for the investigator to receive meaningful guidance in carrying out the proposed research.*

6. PAYMENTS

Payments on Postdoctoral Research Fellowships will be made to the investigator's institution quarterly in equal amounts, with the first payment made after all required information has been provided to AFSP, and the Fellow has indicated that the research project is ready to begin. Payments will precede on-schedule as long as the project is not experiencing significant delays, but may be delayed for projects that are not making adequate progress in completing scheduled activities. Projects experiencing a significant lack of progress may be terminated. (See Section 8. Progress and Final Reports.)

7. FINANCIAL RECORDS AND REPORTS (Download forms at www.afsp.org/grants)

a. A separate account must be maintained for the Postdoctoral Research Fellowship. The account, with substantiating invoices and payrolls, should be available at all times for audit by representatives of AFSP. All financial reports must be signed by the Fellow and the responsible financial officer of the institution.

b. AFSP is not responsible for the over expenditure of Fellowship funds, for commitments against a Fellowship not paid within sixty days after its termination or renewal, or for expenditures made before the approved starting date of the Fellowship.

c. Reports of expenditures must be submitted semi-annually. A final report of expenditures must be submitted within 60 days after termination of the Fellowship, together with the refund of any unexpended balance. Unexpended funds from the Fellowship cannot be carried forward to any other

project or grant.

8. PROGRESS AND FINAL REPORTS (Download forms at www.afsp.org/grants)

Every six months, Fellows **MUST SUBMIT** a brief progress report on work completed. Continuing payment of Fellowship funds is contingent upon timely receipt of progress and financial reports.

All Fellows must also submit a final report within 60 days of the end date of the Fellowship period. Reports of research findings that have not yet been published are considered confidential and this information will not be disseminated without the express consent of the Fellow.

9. PUBLICATIONS

Publications resulting from research supported by the Fellowship should contain appropriate acknowledgement, such as, "Supported by a Postdoctoral Research Fellowship from the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention." The Fellow should send AFSP a PDF copy of all publications emanating from the Fellowship to grantsmanager@afsp.org.

10. CHANGES OR CANCELLATION OF GRANT

If any significant departures are made from the original, approved Fellowship application, AFSP must be notified in writing of the changes and be provided with adequate justification. Based on this information, AFSP reserves the right to terminate the Fellowship if the changes are deemed inappropriate. All budget changes must be requested in writing and signed by the PI and the Financial Officer.

In the event that the Fellow cancels the Fellowship, immediate written notification must be made to AFSP, signed by the Fellow and the financial officer at the sponsoring institution. A final report of expenditures and research accomplishments must be provided within 30 days of the effective date of cancellation. This must be accompanied by

the return of all unexpended Fellowship funds.