



## **Request for Applications: Physician–Investigator Beginning Autism Research Award**

### Introduction

Autism Speaks invites applications from physicians in the first two years of a full-time, tenure-track faculty appointment to conduct biomedical research into the causes, diagnosis, treatment, prevention and cure of autism spectrum disorders.

Autism Speaks supports all areas of basic and clinical research that will advance its biomedical research mission, including but not limited to: human behavior (language, communication, social function), neurobiology (anatomy, development, neuro-imaging), neuropathology, human genetics/genomics, immunology, endocrinology, molecular and cellular mechanisms, and studies employing model organisms. Autism Speaks also encourages proposals for new and much needed studies in epidemiology, and in translational research that applies results and insights obtained from basic and clinical research studies to the treatment (including pharmacological and behavioral approaches) of autism spectrum disorders.

### Awards

Autism Speaks will make a limited number of Physician-Investigator Beginning Autism Research (PIBAR) Awards determined by its available financial resources. Each award will be for a period of three years and will include 80% of salary up to a maximum of \$80,000 per year, and \$20,000 per year for research and related costs and professional travel. The 80% salary award cannot exceed 80% of the sponsoring institution's authorized salary for the appointment level of the applicant at the time of the award. Award recipients are required to commit 80% of their professional time to research related activities for the duration of the award, and cannot simultaneously hold a similar or duplicate award from another funding source. Indirect costs in the amount of 10% of the total annual award will be added to each annual award to cover the Sponsoring Institution's overhead including the award recipient's fringe benefits. This award cannot be used to replace departmental or institutional start-up support, but can be used in conjunction with other research awards.

### Eligibility

Investigators holding an M.D., M.D./Ph.D. or equivalent degree and who are in the first two years of full-time, tenure-track, faculty appointments (or equivalent) at accredited academic, medical or research institutions are eligible to apply. Medical interns or residents in their last year of training are eligible to apply; however, evidence of appointment to a full-time, tenure-track faculty position (or equivalent) must be provided before an award will be made.

### Renewal

PIBAR Awards are eligible for competitive renewal based on demonstrated and timely progress. Each renewal award will be for a period of up to two years and will include 80% of salary up to a maximum of \$90,000 per year, and \$20,000 per year for research and related costs and professional travel. Renewal applications are submitted and reviewed together with new applications, and follow the same application process as new applications except that Letters of Intent and Letters of Recommendation are NOT required. In addition to the standard requirements for new applications, renewal applications should include in the Research Plan a

concise summary of research progress to date and clear justification for continued funding by Autism Speaks in lieu of research support from other funding agencies.

#### Application Process for New Applications

The applicant must first submit a Letter of Intent not to exceed 2 pages to Autism Speaks that includes the following information:

- a. Complete contact information (including email address) for the applicant
- b. A concise description of the sponsoring department's and institution's research environment and commitment to the mentoring and professional development of the physician-investigator
- c. A concise description of the proposed research including: specific aims, methods and expected results
- d. A clear justification for the relevance and potential significance of the proposed research to understanding the causes, diagnosis, treatment, prevention or cure of Autism Spectrum Disorders

Only applicants whose Letters of Intent are approved by Autism Speaks will be invited to submit full proposals. An invited proposal cannot deviate significantly from the project description in its approved Letter of Intent. Proposals received without first obtaining an approved Letter of Intent will be returned without review.

Autism Speaks also reserves the right to return without review any proposal that in its judgment is not in compliance with its rules and procedures for proposal preparation and submission, is not responsive to its research goals, or exceeds its funding limits or available resources.

#### Proposal Preparation

Proposals should be written in 11 point Arial font. Use of smaller or difficult to read fonts may result in the proposal being returned without review.

A PIBAR proposal must include the following sections:

- Research Abstract (maximum 500 words) and Key Words; must be intelligible to a knowledgeable lay person or non-expert, and must describe the project goal(s) and/or hypothesis, specific aims, research methods, expected results and significance/relevance
- Research Plan (maximum 10 pages):
  - Hypothesis and Specific Aims
  - Background and Significance
  - Preliminary Data (optional)
  - Experimental Plan and Methods (including the relationship of the proposed research to other research support and ongoing projects)
- Bibliography with complete literature citations including titles and all authors
- NO Budget is required; salary support will be determined at the time of the award.
- Description of relevant facilities and necessary on-site and off-site resources.
- Biographical Sketch of candidate Physician-Investigator in NIH format not to exceed 3 pages; include education, complete citations (including title) of publications relevant to the proposed research, and briefly describe currently funded research projects
- Current and Pending Support: indicate funding source, total award amount, award duration (inclusive dates), and project title; clearly explain any overlap with the proposed research including the extent to which the projects are redundant or complementary
- Human Subjects and Animal Welfare Certifications must be documented with a copy of an official letter of approval (or equivalent for non-US applicants), which identifies the

Principal Investigator, project title and date of approval, and is signed by the Review Committee Chair or equivalent responsible institutional/government official. Prior certification for another project cannot be substituted, but can be officially amended to include the proposed project. Rules governing human subjects (IRB) and animal welfare (IACUC) certifications for both US and non-US institutions can be found at <http://grants.autismspeaks.org/research/tandc.htm>.

- Letters of Recommendation: Two letters of recommendation from individuals who are familiar with the applicant's education, research training and experience, and professional career goals are required.
- Physician-Investigator Letter of Commitment: The applicant must provide a letter stating his/her commitment to spend 80% of professional time engaged exclusively in autism research related activities for the duration of the award, and in addition, describe any relevant previous research experience and how this award will contribute to his/her immediate and long term career goals and interest in autism research.
- Institutional Letter of Support: The supervising Department Chair or other equivalent institutional official must provide a letter: (1) certifying the applicant's appointment to a full-time, tenure-track faculty (or equivalent ) position; (2) certifying the institution's commitment to honor the requirement that the award recipient devote 80% of his/her professional time exclusively to autism research related activities for the duration of the award, and (3) describing the department's/institution's research and intellectual environment, and commitment to the mentoring and professional development of the physician-investigator.
- Appendices: Critical photographs or instrument descriptions requiring special formatting can be submitted as pdf files and referenced in the Research Plan. A maximum of 3 peer reviewed research publications (including manuscripts under review or accepted for publication) will be accepted; however, manuscripts not yet accepted for review, review articles, book chapters, popular press articles and meeting abstracts will NOT be accepted. WARNING! Appendix publications are provided as a courtesy to the reviewers who are under no obligation to read or consult them in evaluating a proposal.

#### Submission of Letters of Intent and Proposals

Only Letters of Intent and proposals electronically submitted through the Autism Speaks Grants Administration System at <http://grants.autismspeaks.org/research/login.asp> will be accepted for review. Letters of Intent or proposals submitted by regular mail or by email will be returned without review. Please note the following **due dates**:

- **Letters of Intent are due April 2, 2007.**
- Invitations to submit proposals will be issued on or before April 16, 2007.
- **Proposals are due June 15, 2007.**

**IMPORTANT!** Letters of Intent and proposals will NOT BE ACCEPTED after their due dates unless prior permission is obtained, and only for exceptional circumstances (e.g., child birth, serious illness or death in the family, natural disaster).

### Review, Selection and Notification

Peer review panels will meet in October 2007. Funding selections and notifications will be made in October/November 2007 for an expected award date on or about December 15, 2007.

Awards must be started no later than July 1, 2008.

### Payment of Awards

Awards will be paid annually and will be contingent upon registration in the Autism Speaks Grants Administration System of an official authorized to act for the institution receiving the award, and upon acceptance of the Autism Speaks award terms and conditions as described at [terms and conditions](#) including receipt of all required certifications.

Funding for award years 02 and 03 will be contingent upon submission by the physician-investigator of a satisfactory annual project progress report and a financial statement showing expended and unexpended funds through the Autism Speaks Grants Administration System. Unexpended funds in excess of 20% of the annual award must be satisfactorily explained before those funds can be rolled over into the next year of the grant. In addition, the physician-investigator may request a one-time, six-month no-cost extension from the termination date of the award in order to complete necessary work (including data analysis and preparation/submission of manuscripts for publication).

### Review Process and Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be reviewed by independent peer review panels that will include members of Autism Speaks Scientific Advisory Board as well as active and experienced investigators recruited from the scientific community for their expertise in the research areas of the proposals. Proposals will be evaluated using the following criteria:

<b>Significance &amp; Relevance</b>	<b>Does the proposal address an important autism-specific problem? Will the proposed research and expected results contribute new knowledge or methods to advance the goal(s) of understanding the causes, diagnosis, treatment and/or cure of autism spectrum disorders?</b>
<b>Innovation</b>	<b>Does the proposal develop innovative ideas or methods of research, diagnosis or treatment? Does the proposal challenge an existing paradigm?</b>
<b>Approach</b>	<b>Is the experimental approach hypothesis-based or exploratory? If exploratory, will the approach result in testable hypothesis? Will the experimental design, methods and analyses achieve the stated aims of the proposal? Are potential problems and alternative approaches adequately addressed?</b>
<b>Investigator Qualifications &amp; Experience</b>	<b>Does the physician-investigator have the appropriate training and/or prior research experience to conduct the proposed research? Have collaborations with senior investigators to provide necessary research training and ongoing professional mentoring been established?</b>
<b>Environment</b>	<b>Is departmental and institutional environment and commitment sufficient to support the career development of the physician-investigator? Does the investigator have access to necessary research resources either on site or off site? Has access to necessary special research equipment or facilities been</b>

	<b>arranged or provided?</b>
--	------------------------------

Please address questions about proposal submission using the web-based Grants Administration System to Ms. Susan Kravitz, Grants Administrator by telephone at 609-430-9160, Ext. 23 or by email at: [skravitz@autismspeaks.org](mailto:skravitz@autismspeaks.org). All other questions should be addressed to Dr. Charles D. Liarakos, Director of Scientific Review at: [cliarakos@autismspeaks.org](mailto:cliarakos@autismspeaks.org).