

What is NIMH?

The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) is the lead federal agency for research on mental disorders. NIMH is one of the 27 Institutes and Centers that make up the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the principal government agency for medical research. NIH is part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

What is NIMH's mission?

NIMH's mission is to transform the understanding and treatment of mental illnesses through research, paving the way for prevention, recovery, and cure.

In 2010, an estimated 45.9 million adults aged 18 or older in the United States had a mental illness in the past year. This represents 20 percent of all adults in this country (SAMHSA, NSDUH 2012). Research seeks new ways to treat and prevent mental illnesses and improve mental health.

NIMH supports groundbreaking basic, clinical, and translational research.

- Basic research takes place in laboratories and explores the underlying science of the brain and behavior.
- Clinical research takes place in a health care setting and involves human volunteers. It explores the causes and symptoms of mental illnesses and tests new treatments.
- Translational research connects basic research with clinical research, so that scientific discoveries lead to new ways to improve mental health.

How does NIMH fulfill its mission?

To fulfill its mission, NIMH

- Conducts research on mental illnesses, the brain, and behavior.
- Supports research throughout the United States and around the world.
- Supports training for more than 1,000 scientists to carry out mental health research.
- Shares information about research discoveries with scientists, the public, the media, and health care professionals.

NIMH developed a Strategic Plan to guide its research efforts and to ensure scientific breakthroughs become breakthroughs for all people with mental illnesses. The Plan sets four goals for the Institute:

- Promote research about the brain and behavior to find the causes of mental illnesses.
- Chart the development of mental illnesses to find out when, where, and how to take steps to treat them more effectively, or even to prevent them.
- Develop new and better treatments that consider the diverse needs and circumstances of people with mental illnesses.
- Strengthen the public health impact of NIMH-supported research.

What are NIMH's major areas of research?

NIMH has five extramural research divisions that support research programs at hospitals and universities throughout the nation:

- The Division of Neuroscience and Basic Behavioral Science focuses on the science of the brain, genes, and behavior.
- The Division of Adult Translational Research and Treatment Development seeks to understand the science of adult mental illnesses and turn that understanding into new treatments.
- The Division of Developmental Translational Research aims to understand, treat, and prevent mental illnesses in children.
- The Division of AIDS Research supports research on behavioral strategies to stop the spread of HIV/AIDS and research on the mental health effects of HIV/AIDS.
- The Division of Services and Intervention Research supports the study of treatments for mental illnesses and ways to close the gap between current and optimal care.

The Division of Extramural Activities supports these major areas of research by providing leadership and advice for extramural programs and policies; providing guidelines for grant applications; and reviewing applications for grants, contracts, and cooperative agreements.

The Division of Intramural Research Programs is the internal research division of NIMH. This division conducts research and trains researchers at the NIH campus in Bethesda, MD.

The NIMH Office of the Director has several units that support specific areas of research:

- The Office on AIDS directs and supports research on the biological and behavioral causes of HIV/AIDS infection and more effective mechanisms for the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of the disease.
- The Office of Autism Research Coordination coordinates and manages the Autism Coordinating Committee—a federal advisory committee mandated by Congress to coordinate autism-related activities across the HHS.
- The Office of Genomics Research Coordination facilitates and promotes research to elucidate genomic risk factors that underlie mental disorders.
- The Office for Research of Disparities and Global Mental Health coordinates efforts to reduce disparities in mental health and access to mental health care in the United States and around the world.
- The Office of Rural Mental Health directs research on the unique conditions of rural areas and the delivery of mental health services in these areas.
- The Office of Constituency Relations and Public Liaison oversees outreach activities, including gathering public input about NIMH activities; interacting with professional, scientific, and community-based organizations; and handling legislative and congressional issues. Within this office, the Outreach Partnership Program disseminates NIMH science through partnerships with nonprofit organizations in every state, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico.
- The Office of Science Policy, Planning, and Communications directs strategic plans for national mental health policy, creates and implements NIMH's communication efforts, and guides science education activities.
- The Office of Technology Development and Coordination is responsible for oversight of all NIMH efforts related to technology development and scientific informatics.

Where can I find more information about NIMH?

Visit the NIMH website at <http://www.nimh.nih.gov> or contact NIMH to find the latest on research findings, funding opportunities, and information materials, or to get more detail on any of the items discussed in this fact sheet.

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