

Preparing for a Career in Health Services Research Opportunities for Minority Students

The mission of AHRQ is to improve the quality, safety, efficiency, and effectiveness of health care by:

- Using evidence to improve health care.
- Improving health care outcomes through research.
- Transforming research into practice.

The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) supports training opportunities to help individuals prepare for a career in health services research. AHRQ is particularly interested in fostering the professional development of minority health services researchers. This fact sheet presents general information about the various career development opportunities sponsored by AHRQ. You will find more detailed information online; Web addresses are given for each program.

For more information about AHRQ, see the last page of this fact sheet or visit the Agency's Web site at www.ahrq.gov.

What is health services research?

Health services research is a unique "Field of Inquiry," defined by questions and work, not discipline or disease. Health services researchers address a wide range of issues, including consumer education; patient outcomes

and effectiveness of care; health care quality and patient safety; patient-centered care; health care for minorities, children, elderly individuals, and other special populations; and health care access, utilization, cost, and financing. These issues are addressed from a variety of interdisciplinary perspectives and approaches, including:

- Clinical fields of medicine, nursing, dentistry, and allied health.
- Social and behavioral sciences.
- Human factors engineering.
- Epidemiology and biostatistics.
- Multidisciplinary perspectives from health care policy, research, administration, and management

Health services researchers investigate how various factors—including social forces, financing mechanisms, organizational processes and structures, evolving health technologies, and individual behavior—act separately and together to affect the delivery of health care and, ultimately, the health and



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well-being of individuals. They pursue careers in many settings, including academia, professional organizations, health policy groups, clinical settings, and in Federal, State, and local agencies.

Findings and products that result from health services research enable providers, patients, insurers, employers, and other purchasers and policymakers to make better health care decisions. They also can be used to improve the design of health care benefits, develop new policies to optimize the way we finance and pay for care, facilitate access to health care services, and improve patient outcomes.

Is a career in health services research right for you?

If you are interested in searching for answers to the questions and problems that are in the forefront of today's health care arena, a career in health services research may be right for you. AHRQ is seeking qualified applicants, particularly minority applicants, who are interested in training opportunities to prepare them for a career in health services research.

What kinds of training are available?

AHRQ supports both predoctoral and postdoctoral training through the institutional National Research Service Award (NRSA) training programs. These grants are awarded to institutions that in turn recruit and accept students into their programs. AHRQ also awards individual NRSA fellowships to applicants who have completed their research or clinical doctoral degrees. In addition, AHRQ supports dissertation grants for doctoral candidates. Support is also available for career development. These opportunities are supported through three AHRQ programs that

provide mentored and independent support to individuals who have clinical and/or research doctorates. To be eligible for these grants, candidates must be U.S. Citizens, non-citizen nationals, or permanent residents by the time of the award. Minority candidates are strongly encouraged to apply for these fellowships and grants.

Who may apply for a NRSA institutional training grant?

NRSA institutional training grants assist domestic institutions in supporting predoctoral and postdoctoral academic training of qualified individuals who have demonstrated an interest in health services research. These training grants are awarded by AHRQ to institutions, not individuals. The institutions select the recipients of these awards. The awards allow trainees to gain 1 or more years of full-time, supervised experience in applying research methods to the evaluation of health services in preparation for a career in health services research.

Candidates for predoctoral training grants must have a baccalaureate degree and be enrolled in a Ph.D. program or a program leading to an equivalent degree. NRSA grants may not be used to support studies leading to an M.D. Candidates for postdoctoral training grants must have a Ph.D., M.D., D.D.S., Pharm.D., Dr.P.H., Sc.D., D.N.Sc., or other doctoral degree. Tuition benefits are provided, as well as stipends to help trainees defray living expenses during the research training experience.

Academic programs that have received NRSA institutional training awards are listed individually on the AHRQ Web site (www.ahrq.gov/fund/training/t32.htm). Individuals

interested in pursuing a career in health services research are encouraged to review the list to obtain more detailed information on program contacts and Web links to specific training programs.

What are the requirements for a NRSA individual fellowship?

NRSA fellowships are awarded directly to individuals and monitored by AHRQ. These postdoctoral fellowships provide for 1 or more years of academic training and supervised experience in applying quantitative research methods to the systematic analysis and evaluation of health services. Applicants must have a Ph.D., M.D., D.D.S., Sc.D., Dr.P.H., or equivalent doctoral degree from an accredited domestic or foreign institution. This is an ongoing AHRQ program announcement, and applications are accepted throughout the year.

Recipients of AHRQ-supported NRSA fellowships receive stipends to help defray living expenses. Sponsoring non-Federal, nonprofit institutions receive an allowance to cover some of the awardee's expenses. Prior to making formal application for this program, you must be accepted by an appropriate institution and have a sponsor who will supervise your training and research experience. Information about this program is available on the AHRQ Web site (<http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PA-09-229.html>).

Who is eligible for a dissertation grant?

AHRQ supports the health services research dissertation grant program (R36). To be eligible for a dissertation grant, an applicant must be a full-time student in a doctoral program. All requirements for the doctoral degree—other than the dissertation—must be

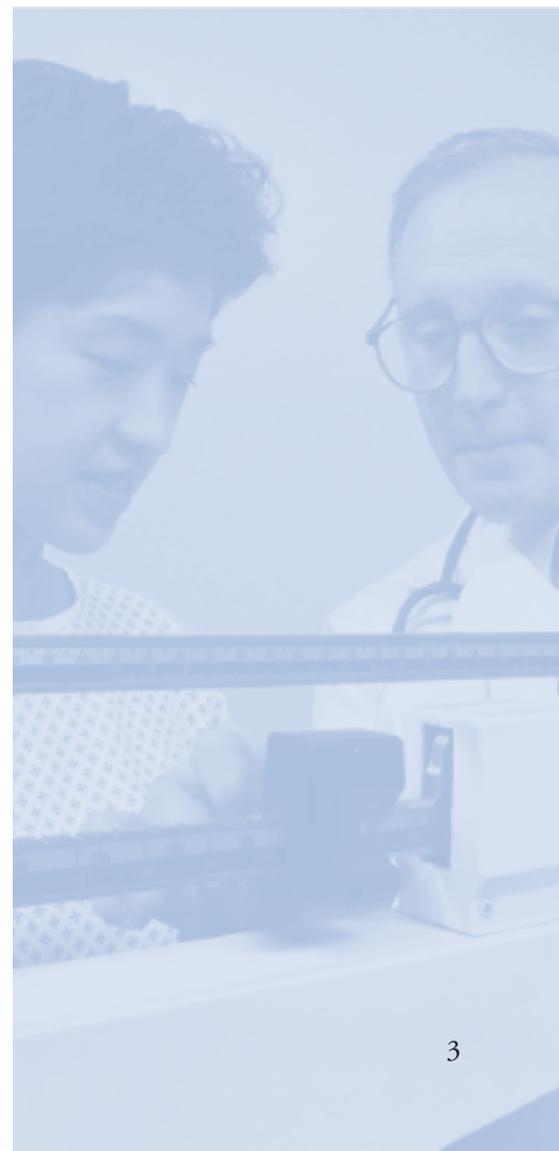
completed by the time of submission, with the exception of the defense and acceptance of the dissertation proposal by the dissertation committee.

Acceptance of the dissertation proposal by the committee has to be completed by the time of the award. Support can be requested for periods ranging from 9 to 17 months. Details are available on the AHRQ Web site (www.ahrq.gov/fund/training/rsrchtng.htm#HSRDA).

Are there other mentored career development opportunities for clinical and research scientists?

AHRQ sponsors two mentored career development opportunities: Mentored Research Scientist Development Awards and Mentored Clinical Scientist Development Awards. These two training programs are described briefly here. More information is available on the AHRQ Web site (www.ahrq.gov/fund/training/rsrchtng.htm#HSRDA).

Mentored Research Scientist Development Awards (K01) provide support for the development of outstanding research scientists who are committed to a career in health services research, with a focus on their development as independent scientists. A candidate for this program must have a research doctoral degree, identify a mentor with extensive research experience, and be willing to spend a minimum of 75 percent of full-time professional effort conducting research and developing a research career during the first part of the award. The applicant may opt to reduce planned time on the grant during the last 2 years, as long as a minimum of 50 percent of his or her time is devoted to the project. Awards provide funding for 3 to 5 years.



Mentored Clinical Scientist

Development Awards (K08) provide support for the development of outstanding clinical scientists who are committed to a career in health services research, with a focus on their development as independent scientists. Candidates must have a clinical doctoral degree, identify a mentor with extensive research experience, and be willing to spend a minimum of 75 percent of full-time professional effort conducting research and developing a research career during the first part of the award. The applicant may opt to reduce planned time on the grant during the last 2 years, as long as a minimum of 50 percent of his or her time is devoted to the grant. Grants provide 3 to 5 years of funding.

Does AHRQ provide career development support for independent scientists?

AHRQ sponsors Independent Scientist Awards (K02) in health services research. These awards are intended to foster the development of promising new investigators in the field. Individual awards support recently minted research and clinical doctorate scientists who are independent but can demonstrate a need for protected time to focus intensively on their research. Awards are provided for 3 to 5 years. More details are available on the AHRQ Web site (<http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PAR-09-086.html>).

How can I get more information and application materials?

To find out more about AHRQ research education and career development opportunities, contact:

Karen Rudzinski, Ph.D.
Director, Division of Research
Education

Office of Extramural Research,
Education, and Priority Populations
Agency for Healthcare Research and
Quality
540 Gaither Road
Rockville, MD 20850
Telephone: 301-427-1529
E-mail: Karen.Rudzinski@ahrq.hhs.gov

Technical assistance is available from AHRQ staff managing specific programs (www.ahrq.gov select “Staff Contacts”).

Where can I get more information about AHRQ's Minority Health Program?

AHRQ's Minority Health Program focuses on both health services research issues—including increasing the participation of minority researchers in health services research—and problems that are important to minority individuals and populations. To find out more about AHRQ's minority research portfolio, contact either:

Francis Chesley, M.D., Director
Office of Extramural Research,
Education, and Priority Populations
Agency for Healthcare Research and
Quality
540 Gaither Road
Rockville, MD 20850
Phone: 301-427-1449
E-mail: Francis.Chesley@ahrq.hhs.gov

Or

Cecilia Rivera Casale, Ph.D.
Senior Advisory for Minority Health
Office of Extramural Research,
Education, and Priority Populations
Agency for Healthcare Research and
Quality
540 Gaither Road
Rockville, MD 20850
Phone: 301-427-1547
E-mail: Cecilia.Casale@ahrq.hhs.gov

About AHRQ

AHRQ is an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. AHRQ's mission is to support research designed to improve the quality of health care, reduce its cost, and broaden access to essential services. AHRQ develops and disseminates research-based information to increase the scientific knowledge needed to enhance consumer decisionmaking, improve health care quality, and promote efficiency in the organization of public and private systems of health care delivery.

If you would like to know more about AHRQ and want to keep abreast of its activities, call the agency's Publications Clearinghouse at 800-358-9295 to subscribe to *Research Activities*. *Research Activities* is AHRQ's free monthly digest of recent research findings, funding opportunities, upcoming conferences, and other timely and important information for the health services research community.

AHRQ is committed to increasing the number of minority health services researchers through enhancing awareness of the training opportunities available to minority applicants.

