

FIRST Research Network

Family Involvement in Recovery Support & Treatment

FIRST Scholars: Mentoring and Pilot Grant Program

Request for Applications

Network Mission. The Family Involvement in Recovery Support and Treatment (FIRST) Research Network is a NIDA-funded multidisciplinary collaborative dedicated to promoting family integration in treatment and recovery support services for youth with substance use problems. Under this mission FIRST aims to maintain a sustainable network of innovative research activities, provider training and measurement resources, and mentoring opportunities.

FIRST Scholars program. This RFA is soliciting applications for the FIRST Scholars program. Scholars will receive both mentoring and pilot grant funding. This RFA requests information specific to proposed pilot activities; candidates will be funded to complete pilot data collection during a one-year period. Candidates who receive pilot grant funding will be automatically enrolled in mentoring activities as well; mentoring will last for a two-year period.

Mentoring Focus. Our mentoring focuses on growing the field of clinical research on family involvement in youth substance use services by providing opportunities for junior investigators to develop research projects and advance professional interests within our Mission scope. Network faculty and advisory board members have expertise in diverse fields (Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology, Addiction Psychiatry, Developmental-Behavioral Pediatrics), scientific areas (clinical trials, implementation science, measurement), clinical foci (youth substance use including opioid use, co-occurring mental health issues, behavioral health disparities), and intervention foci (family systems, telehealth and digital, recovery support planning).

Pilot Grant Project. The FIRST Scholars program will provide funding to support completion of a pilot grant project, which will serve as a centerpiece for mentoring activities. We will fund projects on a rolling basis for \$10,000 to \$20,000 per award, depending on the scope of work. Pilot projects are defined as those that lay a foundation for specified further research. Priorities include focus on involvement of families and concerned significant others in substance use services for youth ages 13-25. Projects examining opioid use disorders and/or recovery support services are especially welcome.

Scholars Program Eligibility. Applications will be accepted from postdoctoral students, fellows, and/or early career professionals only. Persons who have already received R01-level funding are not eligible. Proposals must have a single PI and involve quantitative data collection. Proposals should be limited to a timeline not exceeding 12 months; longer timelines will be considered only under exceptional circumstances. Release of pilot funds is contingent on IRB approval of the proposal.

Inclusion of FIRST-Affiliated Mentors. Most funded applications will include a senior-level Mentor affiliated with the FIRST Research Network. Applicants are invited to contact FIRST in advance of submitting a Letter of Intent to inquire about proposal collaboration with a FIRST-affiliated Mentor. Applicants are permitted to nominate an appropriate Mentor from outside the Network; mentor nominees will be vetted for program suitability and commitment prior to funding decisions.

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Pilot Grant Project

Application Submission & Review Process

1. **Letter of Intent Stage:**
 - a. A Letter of Intent (see page 4) should be submitted electronically to Aaron Hogue (ahogue@toendaddiction.org). **Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis.**
 - b. The LOI will be screened for completeness and relevance, and distributed to the FIRST RFA review committee for discussion. **LOI review will be completed within one month.**
2. **Full Proposal Stage:**
 - a. For those LOIs deemed strongest by the review committee, the PIs will be invited to submit a Full Proposal (see page 5). The committee will vet nominated Mentors who are not Network affiliated. **Full proposals are due four months after LOI review.**
 - b. The submitted Full Proposal will be screened for completeness and relevance and then distributed to the FIRST RFA review committee for full review. **Candidates will be notified of award decisions within two months of Full Proposal submission.**
 - c. Allowable budget expenses: personnel/salary, participant reimbursement, consultants, special equipment/software (requires justification), and indirect costs (capped at 8%).
3. Applicants may be contacted for further information during Full Proposal review. Funding decisions for each application will be made within two months of Full Proposal submission. At that time, PIs with funded awards will receive reviewer feedback, which may indicate required revisions prior to funding allocation.
4. Projects must be relevant to the FIRST mission. Additional review criteria include:
 - a. Significance and Innovation: Does the project explore a research question that has the potential to lead to important scientific advances or promising new methods?
 - b. Approach: Are the rationale and methods sound? If data collection goals are met, will the data substantially increase the fundability of a future related proposal?
 - c. Investigators: Is the PI's training sufficient to maximally benefit from pilot funding?
 - d. Feasibility: Is the research feasible given the resources allotted?
 - e. Plan for Subsequent Funding: Does the PI articulate an explicit plan to use the pilot data to pursue subsequent funding?
5. PIs of non-funded Full Proposals will receive written feedback within six weeks of submission.
6. PIs will be eligible to submit revised applications for future consideration for as long as the FIRST Scholars program remains active.

Fund Distribution and Progress Monitoring

Awarded funds will be distributed in two allocations. The first allocation (50% of total award) will be distributed as soon as possible after the PI (a) responds satisfactorily to Full Proposal review feedback, (2) stipulates mid-point progress benchmarks (e.g., participant recruitment) to be described in a Progress Report, and (3) obtains IRB approval. The PI will submit a 1-page Progress Report at the mid-point of the award period; the award remainder will be allocated based on progress to benchmarks.

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Mentoring Activities

- Within two months of being awarded a pilot grant, the PI and Mentor will submit for committee approval a *Scholars Mentoring Agreement* that stipulates primary mentoring and pilot research goals, quarterly benchmarks, and progress report requirements for the two-year duration of mentoring activities. Progress reports will describe activities related to the pilot grant project as well as other professional development activities.
- The Mentor will meet with the PI at least once per month to review progress toward mentoring benchmarks and discuss pertinent issues related to professional achievement.
- The Mentor will work with the PI to produce and submit at least one peer-reviewed manuscript and one grant application within one year of pilot project completion.
- The PI will be invited to quarterly Mentorship meetings attended by all active PIs, Mentors, and FIRST Steering Committee members in which (a) PIs can present progress on their research and (b) attendees can exchange research and professional socialization ideas and support.
- Once per year, PIs will be invited to attend and present their progress at (a) FIRST advisory board meetings and (b) network meetings with other NIDA-funded recovery research centers.
- As indicated, FIRST Steering Committee members and other Scholars Program Mentors will provide formal reviews of preliminary grant proposals and manuscripts.

FIRST-Affiliated Mentor Candidates

There are several FIRST-affiliated senior investigators who have agreed to serve as Mentors in the FIRST Scholars program. Please feel free to contact us to learn more about prospective Mentors at any time, including in advance of submitting a LOI to discuss proposal ideas and potential Mentor fit.

Pilot Grant Program
Letter of Intent

Letter of Intent Submission Form

Please complete the below; submit the PI’s NIH biosketch; and summarize within 1 page the project’s aims, approach, timetable, and key characteristics of the project setting.

PI Name and Institution	
Date	
Study Title	
Co-Investigators	

Study period	From:		To:	
Estimated Amount to be Requested	Year 1:		Year 2: (if needed)	

Pilot Grant Program
Full Proposal

Full Proposal Submission Form

If invited to complete a Full Proposal, please complete the below; submit the PI’s NIH biosketch and those of other investigators who are not FIRST-affiliated (if applicable); a budget justification (no longer than 1 page); a Research Strategy (detailed below; no longer than 5 pages); and related references.

Research Strategy: Essential Sections

- a. Study Aims and Hypotheses
- b. Significance and Innovation
- c. Methods and Data Analysis Plan
- d. Timeline and Feasibility, including institutional stability of PI during funding period
- e. Plan for Subsequent Funding
- f. Role of Mentor and Professional Fit of Mentoring Activities

PI Name and Institution	
Submit Date	
Study Title	
Mentor; Other Co-Is	

Study period	From: To:	Amount Requested	
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Budget Table *(add lines as needed)*

Item	Cost	Details and Justification