

(HSR&D) Center for Health Equity Research and Promotion (CHERP), and HSR&D's Evidence Synthesis Program (ESP). In 2007, ESP produced a report, titled Racial and Ethnic Disparities in the VA Healthcare System: A Systematic Review, that outlined health disparities within VHA and highlighted promising avenues for future research aimed at improving health equity in the VHA health system. Several studies cited in this report suggested that having a racially and culturally congruent health care environment staffed with clinicians and researchers from diverse backgrounds can help reduce health disparities by elevating trust, reducing skepticism, and enhancing care for minority Veterans. The VA MSIs Research Scientist Training program will directly impact the effort to reduce minority health disparities by significantly increasing the racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity of the clinicians and scientists within VHA over time.

## VA Career Development Program

VA's Career Development Program (CDP) was established to provide mentoring for early-career junior researchers so they can learn from renowned, experienced VA researchers. The program is intended

to attract, develop, and retain talented researchers working in areas of particular importance to improving the health and care of our nation's Veterans. Awardees from this program have become national and international leaders in their research fields. Awards are provided in all areas of VA's research enterprise: Biomedical Laboratory (BLR&D), Clinical Science (CSR&D), Health Services (HSR&D), and Rehabilitation Research (RR&D).

The CDA-2 is an early-career research funding mechanism open to both clinicians and non-clinicians who have the appropriate experience and training as stated in the eligibility section of the CDP handbook. Applicants must specify their career development plans and research projects covering a three- to five-year period. Candidates need not have VA appointments at the time they apply, but must be nominated by a VA facility and must identify an appropriate VA mentor. Nominees should work closely with their sponsoring VA research office to prepare a Letter of Intent (LOI), which is the first step in the review process. If the LOI is approved, the nominee may prepare an application in accordance with CDP guidelines and Request for Applications instructions. The sponsoring VA research office must submit the application on behalf of the nominee. The MSIs Research

Scientist Training Program offers a unique CDA-2 award that requires the applicant to be affiliated with an MS (e.g., employed as a postdoctoral fellow, lecturer or assistant professor) and the primary mentor to be affiliated with a VA medical center. Other members of the mentoring team may include non-VA scientists. Participation by MSI faculty on the mentoring team is highly encouraged. Eligible early career MSI faculty can choose to apply for either the MSI CDA-2 award or the historical general CDA-2 award, but simultaneous applications to both CDA-2 mechanisms will not be considered.

Requests for applications can be found at:  
<https://vaww.research.va.gov/funding/rfa.cfm>

Contacts for the VA MSI Research Scientist Training Program:

BLR&D/CSR&D: [vhadereview@va.gov](mailto:vhadereview@va.gov)

HSR&D: [Robert.Small@va.gov](mailto:Robert.Small@va.gov)

RR&D: [rrdreviews@va.gov](mailto:rrdreviews@va.gov)

# Minority Serving Institutions Research Scientist Training Program



2/2022



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
Veterans Health Administration  
Office of Research & Development

DISCOVERY INNOVATION ADVANCEMENT



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## Key Attributes and Goals

- Establish partnerships with Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) centered on training promising early-career scientists from their campuses within the VHA health care system
- Create a community of MSI-affiliated researchers who perform research within VHA and go on to become independent principal investigators in the VHA intramural research program
- Positively impact health disparities within the VHA health care system by increasing the diversity of its scientific research workforce



## Application Process

Applications for the MSI CDA-2 awards will be accepted according to the sponsored service's review cycles. A letter of intent (LOI) is required prior to submission of full applications; LOI instructions are available at [www.research.va.gov/funding/cdp.cfm](http://www.research.va.gov/funding/cdp.cfm).

Please refer to the VA-ORD Research Career Development Award for Scientists Associated with Minority Serving Institutions Request for Applications (available through your local VA research office) for the timing of submission steps required to meet the deadline for each review cycle. Applicants must identify both a primary mentor from their supporting MSI and a primary mentor from their sponsoring VA medical center. In addition, applicants are strongly advised to assemble an effective mentorship team and present a solid plan for career development in an area of research that is critical to the mission of VHA.

## Overview

The VA Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) Research Scientist Training Program was created to increase the number of underrepresented minority scientists participating in VA research. The centerpiece



of this program is an MSI-focused Career Development Award (CDA-2 mechanism) to support early career scientists who are affiliated with MSIs in collaboration with their local VA medical centers. In addition to these research training awards, the program will periodically coordinate local and national networking meetings between MSI faculty members and researchers and administrators at nearby VA medical centers to facilitate informal interpersonal interactions that can lead to meaningful research collaborations for the benefit of Veterans. MSI Career Development Awardees will be selected through a peer review process coordinated by the VA Office of Research and Development funding services.

## Developing a Diverse Research Workforce

Numerous research studies have demonstrated racial and ethnic disparities in health care in the United States, including within the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) system. Accordingly, VHA has a long-standing portfolio of research addressing the challenges posed by minority health care needs and the disparities that arise in care delivery, access, and quality.

The Office of Research and Development supports several initiatives that address health disparities, including the Health Services Research and Development