New Jersey Governor's Council for Medical Research and Treatment of Autism
New Jersey Department of Health
Request for Application (RFA)
2026

I. Predoctoral Fellowship Program

II. Postdoctoral Fellowship Program

III. Postdoctoral Associate Program

IMPORTANT DATES:

November 22, 2024	**RFA Release (on Autism website)**
January 30, 2025 12:00 PM	Technical Assistance Session (Mandatory)*
February 6, 2025	Letter of Intent Due (Required)**
March 14, 2025	Application Due in SAGE 4:00 p.m.
July 11, 2025	Notice of Grant Award

*All grant applicants (including repeat applicants) must register for and attend the Technical Assistance (TA) virtual meeting January 30, 2025. Additional information will be posted to council's website https://nj.gov/health/autism/index.shtml. The TA meeting will provide an opportunity for potential applicants to ask questions about the RFA and grants management process. TA will also include a presentation and overview from a SAGE team representative.

**A Letter of Intent (LOI) must be received by February 6, 2025 for the applicant to open a grant application in SAGE. Please email: NJGCA@doh.nj.gov with your submission.

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PROGRAM DESCRIPTION AND GUIDELINES

The governing tenet for autism research grant awards stipulates that the Governor's Council for Medical Research and Treatment of Autism (Council) shall make awards of grants and contracts to public and nonprofit private entities (N.J.S.A. 30:6D-56). Additional information about the Council can be found at https://www.state.nj.us/health/autism/index.shtml.

The purpose of this research grant program is to promote and support research capable of advancing the mission of the Council by offering three Student Fellowship awards: 1) Predoctoral Research Fellowships, 2) Postdoctoral Research Fellowships, and 3) Postdoctoral Associate Research Grant. The Predoctoral Fellowship is a two-year program award of $100,000, the Postdoctoral Fellowship is a three-year program award of $240,000, and the Postdoctoral Associate Research Grant is a three-year program award of $195,000. The ability of the Department to make grant awards is expressly dependent upon the availability of funds appropriated by the State Legislature from State and/or federal revenue or such other funding sources as may be applicable. Fellowship awards will begin on July 15, 2025.

1. Predoctoral Fellowship awards are designed to enhance the research training of promising researchers early in their training period, who have the potential to become productive investigators in autism research, as well as to support research capable of advancing the mission of the Council and offer funding for research Projects.
2. Postdoctoral Fellowship awards are designed to aid researchers in their endeavors to promote new approaches to examine the origins, mechanisms, and treatment of Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), as well as to guide postdoctoral applicants on the their path to becoming independent researchers.
3. Postdoctoral Associate Research grants are designed to enhance autism research diversity by supporting a mentored research experience for scientists early in their careers to work within and across traditional disciplinary lines, develop partnerships, and avail themselves of unique research resources, sites and facilities. This program is intended to provide beginning investigators of significant potential with experiences that will establish them in positions of leadership in the scientific community. In addition to hands-on academic research with a faculty advisor, each fellowship cohort will participate in professional development and mentoring activities designed to prepare them for future research careers.

The award for this research grant program is intended to promote ASD research in New Jersey, not to provide long-term support. The data and results gained by using Council funds will allow investigators from New Jersey to develop stronger proposals for submission to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and biomedical research foundations. Applicants shall recognize and agree that the initial

provision of funding for all opportunities and the continuation of funding for research grants under the grant agreement is expressly dependent upon the availability of NJDOH funds appropriated by the State Legislature from State and/or Federal revenue or such other funding sources as may be applicable.

It is the understanding of the Council that all proposals and supporting materials are original ideas/language proposed by the applicant and their affiliated institution. The Council recognizes the National Institutes of Health (NIH) notice number: NOT-OD-23-149 June 23, 2023 (The Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence Technologies is Prohibited for the NIH Peer Review Process) and therefore restrict the Council's contracted Peer Reviewer to the same standard. To paraphrase that ruling, "reviewers must be accountable and aware that uploading or sharing content or original concepts from a grant application, contract proposal, or critique to online generative AI tools violates the peer review confidentiality and integrity requirements." Essentially, to use generative AI to analyze or critique grant applications in Peer Review will be considered a breach of confidentiality.[1] Similarly while AI is not banned in the grant writing process itself, the Council **strongly cautions that Principal Investigators (PI) use AI tools at their own risk**. The PI must be aware of the potential for plagiarism, fabricated citations, and falsified information that may be embedded through the use of generative AI. This would be considered research misconduct, and will warrant the Council taking steps to address non-compliance according to your institution's Research Misconduct policy.

All applicants must read the *SAGE Terms and Conditions for Administration of Grants: Effective for Project Periods Beginning on or After July 1, 2024* and review Appendix 5 before proceeding with the research proposal submission. All terms must be adhered to, with particular emphasis on the following:

- **Subpart E.** Standards for Grantee and Subgrantee Financial Management Systems (page 12)
- **Subpart F.** Cash Management (page 13)
- **Subpart H.** Allowable cost (page 16)
- **Subpart M.** Program Changes and Budget Revisions (page 24)
- **Subpart N.** Property, Equipment, Supplies, and Copyrights (page 27)
- **Subpart O.** Procurement (page 30)
- **Subpart P.** Subgrants (page 37)
- **Subpart Q.** Monitoring and Reporting Program Performance (page 38)
- **Subpart T.** Enforcement (page 44)

[1] McKlveen, Jessica (2023, June 29). Think Again Before Using Generative AI During Peer Review or As you Prepare an Application. https://www.nccih.nih.gov/research/blog/think-again-before-using-generative-ai-during-peer-review-or-as-you-prepare-an-application

- **Subpart U.** After the grant (page 45)

NJDOH administers a diverse array of grant programs that address the missions of its several divisions. The awarding divisions within NJDOH are responsible for the award, administration, and monitoring of these programs under a variety of legislative authorities, governing regulations, policies, and procedures. Grants shall be made to a wide range of applicants, including local governments, institutions of higher education, hospitals, and nonprofit organizations. The administration of a grant not only requires adherence to the program objectives for which the grant was made, but also requires that objectives be accomplished in a businesslike manner. This is particularly important when the costs to applicants and the State are rising and NJDOH funds are limited. For these reasons, applicants must establish sound and effective business management systems to ensure proper stewardship of funds and activities. Applicants are expected to exercise the same degree of prudence in the expenditure of NJDOH funds as they use in expending their own funds.

Council Fellowships will not be awarded to applicants with other *simultaneous or overlapping* Fellowships with the Council. Similarly, fellowships will not be awarded to applicants listed on other Council-funded grants or applications. Candidates who have already accepted another Pre or Postdoctoral Research Fellowship award are not eligible. Given the competitive nature of these grants, applicants are encouraged to submit **one** well-developed and responsive application as opposed to multiple applications. The Council will consider funding multiple Fellows with the *same Mentor/Supervisor* in the same funding cycle provided that the Mentor/Supervisor submits justification. In the event funding is accepted from another agency, it shall be the responsibility of the Institution or Mentor/Supervisor to notify the Council immediately. **Postdoctoral Fellows with continued training/studies beyond 5 years will not be considered for funding.**

All non-funded applicants from any given grant cycle are eligible for resubmission. However, the applicant must revise the non-funded application based on reviewer feedback. All reapplications will be reviewed as new competing proposals.

NJDOH promotes the application of all Health in All Policies to ensure the best outcomes for New Jersey residents. As described by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Health in All Policies applies health consideration into policymaking processes outside of the health sector and where people live, work, and play. NJDOH is focused on improving health outcomes for New Jersey residents at all life stages. Core activities include the use of data to drive measurable health improvements, identify and target vulnerable populations for interventions, eliminating health disparities, and promoting collaboration across sectors to develop health policies and achieve health equity.

Predoctoral Student Fellowships (CAUT26GFP)

Predoctoral Fellowship candidates must be a full-time graduate student in a proposed course of study directly related to ASD. The Council welcomes promising Predoctoral students receiving mentored research training from outstanding faculty while conducting innovative dissertation research that examine the origins, mechanisms, and treatment of Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). Applicants to this program are expected to propose a dissertation research project and training plan related to ASD research.

Research projects must address one of the objectives listed in Appendix 1 "Selected IACC Objectives", which constitute a subset of the Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee (IACC) 2021-2023 Strategic Plan. The data and results gained should allow investigators to develop strong proposals for submission to NIH and biomedical and international funding sources. Preference will be given to research projects judged to have the potential for attracting grant support from federal or other organizations that promote health equity for vulnerable populations, i.e., disabled, LGBTQ, racial and ethnic minorities. Research projects addressing health equity are strongly encouraged and must clearly demonstrate, based on the strength of the logic, a compelling potential to produce a major impact in addressing health disparities and inequities. Additionally, research addressing community-prioritized research questions, cross-cutting issues such as social determinants of health across sectors, multiple levels and systems that contribute to health disparities, and/or priority areas of autism are particularly encouraged.

Training plans for each research project shall reflect the applicant's dissertation, and clearly enhance the individuals's potential to develop into a productive, independent research scientist. The training plan must document the need for, and the anticipated value of, the proposed mentored research and training in relationship to the applicant's research goals. The training plan must also facilitate the applicant's transtition to the next level of research training.

Mentor/Supervisor Expectations

It is expected that the mentored research training experience will provide the applicant with:

- A strong mentorship that is highly encouraged to help the Fellow maintain focus. The Council therefore encourages routine meetings between the mentor/supervisor and fellow at a minimum monthly basis.
- A strong foundation in rigorous research design, experimental methods, and analytic techniques appropriate to ASD research.
- The enhancement of the applicant's ability to conceptualize and think through research problems with increasing independence.

- Experience conducting research using appropriate state-of-the-art methods, as well as presenting and publishing the research findings as first author.
- The opportunity to interact with members of the scientific community at appropriate scientific meetings and workshops.
- Skills needed to transition to the next stage of the applicant's research career.
- The opportunity to enhance the applicant's understanding of ASD-related sciences and the relationship of the proposed research to health and disease.

Predoctoral Fellowship Specifics:

- Applicants for this opportunity must be candidates for the PhD, DrPH, EdD, MD, or equivalent graduate degree and have identified a dissertation research project and Mentor(s)/Supervisor(s).
- Predoctoral Fellowships are two-year awards of $50,000 per year.
- Awards provide an annual stipend of $40,000, a research allowance of $7,500, and a travel budget of $2,500.
- ***No part of the award may be used for fringe, institutional overhead, or indirect costs***.
- Candidates must be full-time graduate students in residence in a proposed course of study directly related to autism and must be accepted for predoctoral training under the supervision of an appropriate Mentor/Supervisor - a scientist (tenure, tenure-track or equivalent position) at a qualifying academic research institution in New Jersey.
- Candidates for the Predoctoral Fellowship will have completed their first year of study and will concentrate at least 80% of their time on a specific ASD related research project. Candidates will have at least two years remaining in their course of study and must be able to pursue the Fellowship under the guidance of a Mentor/Supervisor.
- Applicants may serve as teaching assistants while holding a Predoctoral Fellowship without special permission.
- Non-research activities, such as teaching, may not occupy more than 10% of the fellow's time.

Predoctoral Fellowships will not be awarded to applicants with other *simultaneous or overlapping* Fellowships with any other entity, and thus applicants who have accepted a Predoctoral fellowship from another entity are not eligible to apply. Similarly, fellowships will not be awarded to applicants listed on other Council-funded grants or applications. Given the competitive nature of these grants, applicants are encouraged to submit **one** well-developed and responsive application as opposed to multiple applications. In the event funding is accepted from another agency, it shall be the responsibility of the Institution or Mentor/Supervisor to notify the Council immediately.

Note: The Council will consider funding multiple Fellows with the same Mentor/Supervisor in the same funding cycle provided that the Mentor/Supervisor submits justification.

Postdoctoral Student Fellowships (CAUT26DFP)

The Council welcomes investigators with new approaches to examine the origins, mechanisms, and treatment of Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). The Postdoctoral fellowships are intended to promote collaboration among researchers currently working on ASD-related projects and to encourage researchers in other fields to enter this compelling area of research.

Applicants are expected to propose a research project and training plan in a scientific area relevant to one of the objectives listed in Appendix 1 "Selected IACC Objectives", which constitute a subset of the Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee (IACC) 2021-2023 Strategic Plan. The data and results gained should allow investigators to develop strong proposals for submission to NIH and biomedical and international funding sources. Preference will be given to projects judged to have the potential for attracting grant support from federal or other organizations that promote health equity for vulnerable populations, i.e., disabled, LGBTQ, racial and ethnic minorities. Research projects addressing health equity are strongly encouraged and must clearly demonstrate, based on the strength of the logic, a compelling potential to produce a major impact in addressing health disparities and inequities. Additionally, research addressing community-prioritized research questions, cross-cutting issues such as social determinants of health across sectors, multiple levels and systems that contribute to health disparities, and/or priority areas of autism are particularly encouraged.

The application must consist of a well-conceived scientific project, integrated with a comprehensive training plan which is designed by a collaborative discussion between the applicant (fellow) and Mentor/Supervisor. In addition to preparing the applicant to be a subject matter expert in the proposed research area and to acquire new technical skills, the research and training plans are expected to provide the applicant with a strong understanding of the principles of experimental design and the tools for rigorous analytical approaches. Applicants proposing experimental neuroscience research and/or modeling are expected to propose didactics and training that will enable them to develop state-of-the-art quantitative skills, the principles of quantitative analysis, and to incorporate quantitative approaches that are appropriate to answer the proposed research question. Alternatively, applicants proposing a computational/modeling project are encouraged to gain exposure to the biological approaches from which the data sets they will model are derived. Additionally, the proposed research and training plan should enhance the individual's potential to develop into a productive, independent researcher by providing committed mentorship, appropriate training and career development opportunities, and strong institutional support.

Formal training in analytical tools appropriate for the proposed research is expected to be an integral component of the research training plan. Training plans for each project should provide applicants with instruction using cutting-edge tools, theories and/or approaches that will prepare them to launch

independent research careers in areas that will advance autism research. The training plan must document the need for, and the anticipated value of, the proposed mentored research and training in replationship to the applicant's research goals. The training plan must also facilitate the fellow's transtition to independent research.

Mentor/Supervisor Expectations

It is expected that the mentored research training experience will provide the Postdoctoral Fellow with:

- A strong foundation in rigorous research design, experimental methods, and analytic techniques appropriate to ASD research to ensure that the applicant has the knowledge and skills to generate robust and reproducible data.
- Opportunities to publish the research findings as first author, as well as present findings at national meetings as the work progresses.
- Experience conducting research using appropriate state-of-the-art methods, and an expert understanding of the tools and methods used.
- The opportunity to interact with members of the scientific community at appropriate scientific meetings and workshops.
- Skills needed to transition to the next stage of the applicant's research career.
- The opportunity to enhance the applicant's understanding of ASD-related sciences and the relationship of the proposed research to health and disease.
- In addition to aiding in the planning, execution and supervision of the proposed research, the Mentor's/Supervisor's role is to foster the development of the Fellow's overall knowledge, technical and analytical skills, and capacity for scientific inquiry.
- The Mentor/Supervisor is also expected to assist the applicant in attaining desired career goals.

Postdoctoral Fellowship Specifics:

- Postdoctoral student applicants must hold a PhD, MD, DrPH, DO, or equivalent graduate degree prior to activation of a fellowship award and must be accepted for Postdoctoral training in a proposed course of study directly related to autism under the guidance of an appropriate Mentor/Supervisor - a scientist (tenure, tenure-track, or equivalent position) at a qualifying academic research institution in New Jersey.
- Postdoctoral Fellowships are three-year awards of $80,000 per year.
- Awards provide an annual stipend of $60,000, a research allowance of $17,500, and a travel budget of $2,500.
- ***No part of the award may be used for fringe, institutional overhead, or indirect costs***.

- Candidates for the Postdoctoral Fellowship must concentrate at least 80% of their time on a specific ASD related research project. Candidates must also be able to pursue the next step toward independence under the guidance of a Mentor/Supervisor.
- Applicants may serve as teaching assistants while holding a Postdoctoral Fellowship without special permission.
- Non-research activities, such as teaching, may not occupy more than 10% of the fellow's time.
- **Postdoctoral <u>Associates</u> are not eligible for this award.**
- **Postdoctoral Fellows with continued training/studies beyond 5 years <u>will not</u> be considered for funding.**

Postdoctoral Fellowships will not be awarded to applicants with other *<u>simultaneous or overlapping</u>* Fellowships with any other entity, and thus applicants who have accepted a Postdoctoral fellowship from another entity are not eligible to apply. Similarly, fellowships will not be awarded to applicants listed on other Council-funded grants or applications. Given the competitive nature of these grants, applicants are encouraged to submit **<u>one</u>** well-developed and responsive application as opposed to multiple applications. In the event funding is accepted from another agency, it shall be the responsibility of the Institution or Mentor/Supervisor to notify the Council immediately.

Note: The Council will consider funding multiple Fellows with the same Mentor/Supervisor in the same funding cycle provided that the Mentor/Supervisor submits justification.

Postdoctoral Associate Research Grant (CAUT26DAP)

The Council welcomes investigators with new approaches to examine the origins, mechanisms, and treatment of Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). The Postdoctoral Associate Research Grants are intended to enhance inclusivity in the autism workforce and maintain a strong cohort of new and talented, independent investigators from diverse backgrounds, including those from underrepresented groups in the biomedical and behavioral sciences. This program is designed to facilitate a timely transition of outstanding postdoctoral researchers with a research and/or clinical doctorate degree from mentored, postdoctoral research positions to independent, tenure-track or equivalent faculty positions. The program will provide independent research support during this transition to assist awardees in launching independent research careers.

Applicants are expected to propose a research project and training plan in a scientific area relevant to one of the objectives listed in Appendix 1 "Selected IACC Objectives", which constitute a subset of the Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee (IACC) 2021-2023 Strategic Plan. The data and results gained should allow investigators to develop strong proposals for submission to NIH and biomedical and international funding sources. Preference will be given to projects judged to have the potential for attracting grant support from federal or other organizations that promote health equity for vulnerable populations, i.e., disabled, LGBTQ, racial and ethnic minorities. Research projects addressing health equity are strongly encouraged and must clearly demonstrate, based on the strength of the logic, a compelling potential to produce a major impact in addressing health disparities and inequities. Additionally, research addressing community-prioritized research questions, cross-cutting issues such as social determinants of health across sectors, multiple levels and systems that contribute to health disparities, and/or priority areas of autism are particularly encouraged.

The application must consist of a well-conceived scientific project, integrated with a comprehensive training plan which is designed by a collaborative discussion between the applicant (fellow) and Mentor/Supervisor. In addition to preparing the applicant to be a subject matter expert in the proposed research area and to acquire new technical skills, the research and training plans are expected to provide the applicant with a strong understanding of the principles of experimental design and the tools for rigorous analytical approaches. Applicants proposing experimental neuroscience research and/or modeling are expected to propose didactics and training that will enable them to develop state-of-the-art quantitative skills, the principles of quantitative analysis, and to incorporate quantitative approaches that are appropriate to answer the proposed research question. Alternatively, applicants proposing a computational/modeling project are encouraged to gain exposure to the biological approaches from which the data sets they will model are derived. Additionally, the proposed research and training plan should enhance the individual's potential to develop into a productive,

independent researcher by providing committed mentorship, appropriate training and career development opportunities, and strong institutional support.

Formal training in analytical tools appropriate for the proposed research is expected to be an integral component of the research training plan. Training plans for each project should provide applicants with instruction using cutting-edge tools, theories and/or approaches that will prepare them to launch independent research careers in areas that will advance autism research. The training plan must document the need for, and the anticipated value of, the proposed mentored research and training in replationship to the applicant's research goals. The training plan must also facilitate the fellow's transtition to independent research.

Mentor/Supervisor Expectations

It is expected that the mentored research training experience will provide the Postdoctoral Fellow with:

- A strong foundation in rigorous research design, experimental methods, and analytic techniques appropriate to ASD research to ensure that the applicant has the knowledge and skills to generate robust and reproducible data.
- Opportunities to publish the research findings as first author, as well as present findings at national meetings as the work progresses.
- Experience conducting research using appropriate state-of-the-art methods, and an expert understanding of the tools and methods used.
- The opportunity to interact with members of the scientific community at appropriate scientific meetings and workshops.
- Skills needed to transition to the next stage of the applicant's research career.
- The opportunity to enhance the applicant's understanding of ASD-related sciences and the relationship of the proposed research to health and disease.
- In addition to aiding in the planning, execution and supervision of the proposed research, the Mentor's/Supervisor's role is to foster the development of the Fellow's overall knowledge, technical and analytical skills, and capacity for scientific inquiry.
- The Mentor/Supervisor is also expected to assist the applicant in attaining desired career goals.

Postdoctoral Fellowship Specifics:

- Postdoctoral student applicants must hold a PhD, MD, DrPH, DO, or equivalent graduate degree prior to activation of a fellowship award and must be accepted for Postdoctoral training in a proposed course of study directly related to autism under the guidance of an appropriate Mentor/Supervisor - a scientist (tenure, tenure-track, or equivalent position) at a qualifying academic research institution in New Jersey.

- Postdoctoral Fellowships are three-year awards of $65,000 per year.
- Awards provide an annual stipend of $50,000, a research allowance of $12,500, and a travel budget of $2,500.
- ***No part of the award may be used for fringe, institutional overhead, or indirect costs***.
- Candidates for the Postdoctoral Fellowship must concentrate at least 80% of their time on a specific ASD related research project. Candidates must also be able to pursue the next step toward independence under the guidance of a Mentor/Supervisor.
- Applicants may serve as teaching assistants while holding a Postdoctoral Fellowship without special permission.
- Non-research activities, such as teaching, may not occupy more than 10% of the fellow's time.
- **Postdoctoral candidates with continued training/studies beyond 5 years <u>will not</u> be considered for funding.**

Postdoctoral Associate Research Grants will not be awarded to applicants with other *<u>simultaneous or overlapping</u>* Fellowships with any other entity, and thus applicants who have accepted a Postdoctoral fellowship from another entity are not eligible to apply. Similarly, fellowships will not be awarded to applicants listed on other Council-funded grants or applications. Given the competitive nature of these grants, applicants are encouraged to submit **<u>one</u>** well-developed and responsive application as opposed to multiple applications. In the event funding is accepted from another agency, it shall be the responsibility of the Institution or Mentor/Supervisor to notify the Council immediately.

Note: The Council will consider funding multiple Fellows with the same Mentor/Supervisor in the same funding cycle provided that the Mentor/Supervisor submits justification.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Qualified Individuals

Individuals with the skills, knowledge, and resources necessary to carry out the proposed research as the Principal Investigator are invited to work with their mentors/supervisors and organizations to develop an application. *Multiple PIs are not allowed*. **Applicants must be affiliated with a New Jersey State medical school, a New Jersey State academic institution, a New Jersey State research organization or a New Jersey State public or private non-profit entity with a demonstrated capability to conduct grant-funded research.** The Council will not award grants to unaffiliated individuals. Individuals from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups as well as individuals with disabilities are encouraged to apply. Individuals of any nationality or citizenship status may apply provided they hold employment or affiliation with a qualifying entity, as described below. If the research project will be provided through collaboration, the structure of the collaborative arrangement must be described in the application.

At the time of award, applicants are required to pursue their research on a full-time basis, normally defined as 35 hours per week or as specified by the sponsoring institution in accordance with its own policies.

Before submitting the proposed research project, applicants must identify a Mentor(s)/Supervisor(s) who will supervise the proposed training experience. The primary Mentor/Supervisor must be actively involved with the research, committed to the research process, and available to provide oversight and supervision to the research. Applicants are encouraged to identify more than one Mentor/Supervisor, i.e., a Mentor/Supervisor team, if this is deemed advantageous for providing expert advice in all aspects of the research training process. The Mentor/Supervisor must document the availability of sufficient research funds and facilities for high-quality research training. The Mentor/Supervisor, or a member of the Mentor/Supervisor team, should have a successful track record of mentorship. When there is a Mentor/Supervisor team, one individual must be identified as the primary Mentor/Supervisor and will be expected to coordinate the applicant's overall training. Applicants must work with their Mentor(s)/Supervisor(s) in preparing the application.

Qualified Research Institutions

Only those entities credentialed as a public and/or private non-profit organization in the State of New Jersey may apply for a Council grant under this RFA. The institution must be a New Jersey academic institution, New Jersey research organization, or New Jersey public or private non-profit entity with a demonstrated capability to conduct grant-funded activities that have obtained a Council/NJDOH research credential status. The research-credentialed entity must have established procedures to receive and administer Federal and State grants and adhere to procedures for the protection of human subjects as regulated by NIH. The research-credentialed entity must also have an Institutional Review Board (IRB) that will approve the proposed research activities.

The Council will not accept grant applications from non-credentialed research institutions. However, non-credentialed research institutions may request an application from NJGCA@doh.nj.gov prior to applying for a research grant award.

The Council requires compliance with NIH, the HHS Office for Human Research Protections, and institutional guidelines defined for the protection of human subjects in research (see Appendix 7).

FUNDING AVAILABILITY, OBLIGATIONS AND DEADLINES

Predoctoral Fellowships are two-year awards of $50,000 per year including a stipend of $40,000, a research allowance of $7,500, and a travel budget of $2,500. Postdoctoral Fellowships are three-year awards of $80,000 per year including a stipend of $60,000, a research allowance of $17,500, and a travel budget of $2,500. Postdoctoral Associate Research Grants are three-year awards of $65,000 per year including a stipend of $50,000, a research allowance of $12,500, and a travel budget of $2,500. ***No part of any award may be used for fringe, institutional overhead, or indirect costs***. The ability of the Department to make grant awards is expressly dependent upon the availability of funds appropriated by the State Legislature from State and/or federal revenue or such other funding sources as may be applicable. Fellowships will not be awarded to applicants with other fellowship awards.

Letters of intent are required and may be submitted at any time; however, letters are due no later than February 6, 2025. Applications must be submitted by March 14, 2025. The anticipated project start date is July 15, 2025.

Successful applicants must abide by all programmatic and fiscal requirements of NJDOH, including:

1. Terms and Conditions for the Administration of Grants;
2. General and specific grant compliance requirements issued by the granting agency; and
3. Applicable Federal Cost Principles relating to the applicant.
4. Immediate notification if the grant award cannot be accepted, is canceled, or encounters any difficulties that would prevent its completion prior to the expenditure of funds. Failure to fully comply in this area may result in a charge back to the institution.
5. Publications, patents, clinical applications and/trials resulting from research supported by the Council shall contain acknowledgment of funding source such as: "research funding provided by the New Jersey Governor's Council for Medical Research and Treatment of Autism (grant #xxxxx"). Grantees must provide 3 reprints of Council -supported research materials to the Council Program Management Officer.

APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

Applicants are required to submit the following information to move their proposal forward to external review. Applications that do not include all required documents will be regarded as incomplete and will not be reviewed.

Letter of Intent

A Letter of Intent (LOI) is required and may be submitted at any time; however, all LOIs are due no later than February 6, 2025. The LOI template can be found on the Council website at https://www.state.nj.us/health/autism/documents.shtml. Applicants must download and fill the form and send the letter in PDF format to NJGCA@doh.nj.gov. If you do not receive an acknowledgement of receipt within 2 business days, please call 609-913-5002.

Technical Assistance Session

A mandatory Technical Assistance (TA) Session is scheduled for January 30, 2025 at 12:00 PM. This session will provide an overview of the role of the Council as the funding agent for this opportunity, as well as an in-depth tutorial of the New Jersey System for Administering Grants Electronically (SAGE). **The annual TA session is mandatory for *all* applicants; those who do not register and attend will have their application removed from consideration**.

To register for the webinar, an email with the following information must be sent to NJGCA@doh.nj.gov no later than January 29, 2025:

I. Name (with credentials)
II. Organization
III. Email
IV. Telephone

Researcher/ Key Personnel Bio-sketch(es) and CVs

Bio-sketches and CVs must be provided for all key personnel involved in the project (this includes the Mentor/Supervisor).

The Council endorses the use of NIH's standard bio-sketch template for its use in the Research Pilot grant application. Download the current templated form here.

Additional information for the Biographical Sketch (bio-sketch) for each key personnel named must include:

1. Active support

2. Applications and proposals pending review or funding
3. Applications and proposals planned or being prepared for submission. Include all Federal, non-Federal, and institutional grant and contract support. If none, state "None."

Full Project Proposal with Figures

Refer to reviewer questions in Appendix 2 for information on the project proposal as well as additional criteria that may be beneficial to your narrative.

While AI is not banned in the grant writing process itself, the Council **strongly cautions that Principal Investigators (PI) use AI tools at their own risk** (see page 4 for more details).

Objectives and Activities

A listing of the project's Objectives and Activities (O&A) based on the project's aims is required as part of the full project proposal. The O&A template can be found on the Council website at https://www.state.nj.us/health/autism/documents.shtml. Applicants must download and fill the form and send as an appendix to the full project proposal.

Comments of the Mentor/Supervisor

Detailed training plans and applicant qualifications must be outlined by the Mentor/Supervisor. The Mentor/Supervisor should explain the importance of the problem or critical barrier to progress that the proposed project addresses. Strengths and weaknesses in the rigor of the prior research (both published and unpublished) that serves as the key support for the proposed project should be discussed, and the Mentor/Supervisor should explain how the proposed project will improve scientific knowledge, technical capability, and/or clinical practice in one or more broad fields. The Mentor/Supervisor should describe how the concepts, methods, technologies, treatments, services, or preventative interventions that drive this field will be changed if the proposed aims are achieved.

If the applicant is proposing to gain experience in a clinical trial as part of his or her research training, describe the relationship of the proposed research project to the clinical trial. The Mentor/Supervisor should also describe the roles and responsibilities that both he/she and the fellow are undertaking, including contributions to the research plan, the portion of the research ideas and plan that originated with the candidate, and the relationship between the proposed research plan and funded or unfunded research projects previously devised by the Mentor/Supervisor.

*Refer to reviewer questions in Appendix 3 for additional criteria that may be beneficial to your narrative.

Budgetary Requirements

Direct costs for all years of the grant must be detailed. *Fringe rates and indirect costs are not allowable and must not be included in budgetary calculations.*

Officers and Directors

A complete listing of all officers and board members of the applicant is required.

Disclosures and Certifications

In projects utilizing human or animal subjects the following may be required:

- Animal Welfare Assurance Number
- Recombinant DNA Assurance Number
- Human Subject Assurance Number

Additional Documentation

The following forms are ***required*** to complete your application and must be uploaded in the "Attachments" section of SAGE:

- 2 Letters of Reference (excluding the Mentor/Supervisor)
- Organizational Letter of Support
- Board of Directors/Trustees
- NJ Charities Registration
- Proof of Non-Profit Status (501C3)
- Proof of Indirect Rate
- Salary Policy
- Annual Audit Report (Most Current)
- Audit Engagement Letter
- Tax Clearance Certificate

The following supplemental forms are required ***only*** if your proposal contains these elements:

- Travel Policy
- Telephone Policy
- Computer Security Policy
- Policy on Protecting Human Subjects and Genomics
- IRB Policy
- Statement of Local Governmental Public Health Partnership

Applications must be submitted ***electronically*** by the due date per the instructions described in "*APPLICATION INQUIRIES*". Applications that do not include all required documents will be regarded as incomplete and will not be reviewed.

APPLICATION INQUIRIES

Questions regarding applications may be addressed to NJGCA@doh.nj.gov. Inquiries and responses will end March 11, 2025.

ORI will only accept applications submitted electronically through the New Jersey System for Administering Grants Electronically (SAGE) at www.sage.nj.gov until 4:00 PM on March 14, 2025. All questions related to your SAGE application (uploads, attachments, etc.) must be directed to the SAGE Help Desk Monday through Friday, 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM; (609) 376-8508 or njdoh.grants@doh.nj.gov.

GRANT REVIEW AND FUNDING DECISIONS

Review Process

All proposals will be reviewed in accordance with the Grant Review Process set forth herein. The determination of grant awards will be made through a three-step review process:

1. Administrative Review (Office of Research Initiatives):

Upon receipt, all grant applications will be reviewed by the Council office for compliance with all applicable New Jersey State statutes and regulations, and to ensure completeness and accuracy. In the event a grant application needs correction due to a budgetary issue, the applicant will be contacted to provide a revised budget. In the event the Council office determines that an application does not meet the administrative requirements, the application will be denied, and will not be forwarded for independent scientific merit review.

2. Independent Relevance Review (Independent Relevance Review Panel):

The Council subcontracts the Peer Review process through an outside entity. An independent relevance review will be conducted by a three-person external expert panel. The panel will determine the relevance of all applications to the Council's mission, priorities, and Research Guidelines, and will assign expert scientific reviewers for each proposal that meets those relevancy requirements. In the event the panel determines that an application does not meet those requirements, the application will be triaged, and will not be forwarded for independent scientific merit review. The decision to forward an application for independent scientific merit review is based only on relevance to the Council's mission, priorities, and research guidelines, and does not guarantee that an award will be made. All applications will receive a written critique, and the panels will assign overall impact scores to each application.

It is the understanding of the Council that all proposals and supporting materials are original ideas/language proposed by the applicant and their affiliated institution. The Council recognizes the National Institutes of Health (NIH) notice number: NOT-OD-23-149 June 23, 2023 (The Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence Technologies is Prohibited for the NIH Peer Review Process) and therefore restrict the Council's contracted Peer Reviewer to the same standard. To paraphrase that ruling, "reviewers must be accountable and aware that uploading or sharing content or original concepts from a grant application, contract proposal, or critique to online generative AI tools violates the peer review confidentiality and integrity requirements." Essentially, to use generative AI to analyze or critique grant applications in Peer Review will be considered a breach of confidentiality.[2] Similarly while AI is not banned in the grant writing process itself, the Council **strongly cautions that Principal**

[2] McKlveen, Jessica (2023, June 29). Think Again Before Using Generative AI During Peer Review or As you Prepare an Application. https://www.nccih.nih.gov/research/blog/think-again-before-using-generative-ai-during-peer-review-or-as-you-prepare-an-application

Investigators (PI) use AI tools at their own risk. The PI must be aware of the potential for plagiarism, fabricated citations, and falsified information that may be embedded through the use of generative AI. This would be considered research misconduct, and will warrant the Council taking steps to address non-compliance according to your institution's Research Misconduct policy.

3. Scientific Merit Review (Independent Scientific Merit Review Panel):

Members of the Independent Scientific Merit Review Panel will convene to evaluate all research grant applications. The Panel will judge the applications on significance to ASD and feasibility (see details in Abstracts and Narrative Questions) and make funding recommendations to the Council.

Grants triaged by either the Independent Relevance Review Panel and/or the Independent Scientific Merit Review Panel will not be forwarded to the Council and will not be funded.

The authority to authorize or not authorize grants is fully vested in the Council according to New Jersey statute P.L. 2007, c.168 (NJSA C.30:6D-60).

Funding Decision

The Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) will conduct a scientific merit review of the results of the Relevance Review Panels and may provide additional advice to the Council based on the scientific and technical merit of the proposed projects, as well as the relevance of the proposed projects to program priorities. Through the Executive Director, the results of the scientific merit review will be forwarded to the Council for final review and action. Based on SAC advice, the Council may decide to fund a project only under certain conditions, including but not limited to funding only the first specific aim.

The Council will make the final funding recommendations, considering its mission and the potential impact of the grant on the understanding, prevention, evaluation and treatment of ASD. The authority to authorize or not authorize grants is fully vested in the Council according to New Jersey statute P.L. 2007, c.168 (NJSA C.30:6D-60).

Funding Restrictions

Domestic travel to 1 (one) conference is allowed and capped at $2,500. If presenting, the subject matter ***must*** be the Council funded project.

Recipients shall NOT use funds for the following:

- Purchasing vehicles
- International travel
- Food or refreshments
- Interest on loans for the acquisition and/or modernization of an existing building
- Tuition reimbursement for students
- Construction

RESULTS NOTIFICATION

At the conclusion of the selection process, all applicants including Principal Investigators and institutions will be formally notified of the outcome of their application no later than July 8, 2025 via a Letter of Intent to Find or a Letter of Denial. At that time, formal notification will be made to the institutions of successful applicants. NJDOH contracts (Attachments A and C) will be initiated shortly thereafter and sent to applicants who receive a Letter of Intent to Fund. Blinded critiques and scores will be provided to both funded and non-funded applicants; no further information shall be provided. *Selection of an application for award is not an authorization to begin performance.* Any costs incurred before receipt of the Notice of Grant Award (NOGA) are at the recipient's risk.

Please note that all awarded applicants will be required to attend, provide, and present a poster presentation of their research at the Council's annual Autism Symposium. Autism grant funds can be used to purchase materials for presentations. Additional information will be provided to awarded applicants after results have been sent.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 – SELECTED IACC OBJECTIVES

The selected questions below can be found in the Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee (IACC) 2021-2023 Strategic Plan.

	QUESTION 1 HOW CAN WE IMPROVE IDENTIFICATION OF AUTISM? ***SCREENING AND DIAGNOSIS***
1	Support research on how early detection of autism influences outcomes.
2	Reduce disparities in early detection and access to services.
3	Develop and adapt screening and diagnostic tools, including tools that incorporate new technologies to increase efficiency, accuracy, and timeliness of identification.

	QUESTION 2 WHAT IS THE BIOLOGY UNDERLYING AUTISM? ***BIOLOGY***
1	Foster research to better understand the processes of early development, molecular and neurodevelopmental mechanisms, brain circuitry, and cognitive development that contribute to the structural and functional basis of autism.
2	Support research to understand the underlying biology of co-occurring conditions in autism and to understand the relationship of these conditions to autism.
3	Support large-scale longitudinal studies to answer questions about the development and natural history of autism across the lifespan, from pregnancy through childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and older adulthood.

	QUESTION 3 WHAT ARE THE GENETIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO AUTISM AND ITS CO-OCCURRING CONDITIONS? ***GENETIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS***
1	Strengthen understanding of genetic factors that influence autism and its co-occurring conditions across the full diversity of individuals on the autism spectrum.
2	Understand the influence of environmental factors on the onset and progression of autism and its co-occurring conditions, enabling the development of strategies to maximize positive outcomes.
3	Expand knowledge about how multiple environmental and genetic factors interact through specific biological mechanisms to manifest in autism phenotypes.

QUESTION 4 WHICH INTERVENTIONS WILL IMPROVE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING?

INTERVENTIONS

1	Develop and improve pharmacological and other medical interventions that will maximize positive outcomes for individuals on the autism spectrum.
2	Create and improve a variety of psychosocial, developmental, occupational, and educational interventions that will maximize positive outcomes for individuals on the autism spectrum.
3	Develop and improve technology-based interventions that will maximize positive outcomes for individuals on the autism spectrum.

QUESTION 5 WHAT SERVICES AND SUPPORTS ARE NEEDED TO MAXIMIZE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING?

SERVICES AND SUPPORTS

1	Develop service approaches and scale up and implement evidence-based interventions in community settings.
2	Address disparities in service provision and improve access to services for all, including low-resource and underserved communities and individuals and families with high support needs.
3	Improve service delivery to ensure quality and consistency of services across many domains with the goal of maximizing positive outcomes and the value that individuals get from services.

QUESTION 6 HOW CAN WE ADDRESS THE NEEDS OF PEOPLE ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM THROUGHOUT THE LIFESPAN?

LIFESPAN

1	Support development and coordination of integrated services to help people on the autism spectrum successfully transition to adulthood and progress through the lifespan with appropriate services and supports.
2	Support research and develop and implement approaches to improve physical and mental health outcomes across the lifespan, with the goal of improving safety, reducing premature mortality, and enhancing health and well-being.
3	Support research, services activities, and outreach efforts that facilitate and incorporate accessibility, as well as acceptance, accommodation, inclusion, independence, and integration of people on the autism spectrum.

	**QUESTION 7** HOW DO WE EXPAND AND ENHANCE RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURE SYSTEMS TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THE AUTISM COMMUNITY? ***INFRASTRUCTURE AND PREVALENCE***
1	Promote growth, linkage, coordination, and security of biorepository and data repository infrastructure systems, equitable access to these systems, and inclusion of diverse samples.
2	Expand and enhance the research workforce, with attention to diversity and inclusion, and accelerate the pipeline from research to practice.
3	Strengthen statistical data gathering systems to advance understanding of the autistic population, while allowing comparisons and linkages across systems as much as possible.

	**CROSS-CUTTING RECOMMENDATIONS**
1	Support research to understand sex and gender differences in autism.
2	Support diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility efforts in research, services, and policy that reduce disparities and increase equity for underrepresented, underserved, and intersectional populations within the autism community and enhance opportunities for autistic people.

APPENDIX 2 – ABSTRACTS AND NARRATIVE QUESTIONS – PREDOCTORAL/ POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIPS AND POSTDOCTORAL ASSOCIATE RESEARCH GRANTS (CAUT26GFP, CAUT26DFP, and CAUT26DAP)

Proposal Lay Abstract: Describe your research project in simple, non-technical language that is understandable by a person not trained in science. Include how your project will advance the understanding, prevention, evaluation, and treatment of autism spectrum disorders, enhancing the lives of individuals across their lifespans. This abstract is meant to serve as a public description of the proposed research, and should the award be made, will be used in press releases and various Council publications.

Proposal Abstract: State the application's long-term objectives and specific aim(s), making reference to the project's focus on autism, and describe concisely the methods for achieving these goals. Avoid summaries of past accomplishments and the use of the first person. The abstract is meant to serve as a succinct and accurate description of the proposed work when separated from the application.

Proposal Narrative with Figures (*see Appendix 5 for page limits and formatting requirements*):

A. **IACC Objective:** State the IACC objective (see the subset of IACC objectives in Appendix 1) that is addressed by the proposed project and summarize the expected outcomes.

B. **Scientific Rationale and Significance:** Explain how this project has the potential to effect direct clinical impact and advance the current knowledge in ways that can improve the physical and/or behavioral health and well-being of individuals with ASD. How will scientific knowledge, clinical care or public health be advanced? Explain why the literature/your research leads you to a need to study this topic. Relate the payoff to science AND to public health. Mention what makes the project unique and innovative, especially in light of any similar projects and the refereed literature.

C. **Innovation:** Does the proposed research include novel concepts, approaches and/or methods? If so, please describe. Does the research challenge and seek to shift current research or clinical practice paradigms? If so, please describe. Describe how the project will challenge and seek to shift current research paradigms by utilizing novel theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation, or interventions. Are the concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation, or interventions novel to one field of research or novel in a broad sense? Is a refinement, improvement, or new application of theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation, or interventions proposed? Discuss how the research project provides novel or innovative insights into improving the health of one or more populations, especially those experiencing health disparities. Note that the relevance of the project to public health needs is more important than its innovation.

D. **Approach, Experimental Design and Capability:** Clearly state the purpose and nature of the research project including:

- Your plan to develop hypothesis driven research, when appropriate, as well as specific aims
- Background and significance
- The population (age range, gender, race, selective characteristics), interventions, controls, measures, etc. that will enable testing your hypotheses. Estimate the required sample and power (N, levels of analysis). Justify the statistical approach that will ensure a fair test of your hypotheses
- Preliminary data (optional)
- Experimental design and research methods, including research subjects, data collection methods, and planned statistically sound analyses for each specific aim
- Project objectives for each year of the grant.
- Discuss potential problems and alternative strategies. If the project is in the early stages of development describe any strategy to establish feasibility and address the management of any high-risk aspects of the project.
- Discuss the potential of the project to move basic science discoveries more quickly and efficiently into practice.

E. **Environment and Key Personnel:** Describe the overall environment – features of the institutional environment that are or would be relevant to the effective implementation of the proposed pilot project. As appropriate, describe available resources, such as clinical and laboratory facilities, equipment, and other physical resources. Describe participating and affiliated units, patient populations, geographical distribution of space and personnel, and consultative resources. Describe the proposed structure and the relationships with clinical sites, collaborators and consultants as related to the scientific objectives and project needs.

Note: Please attach a letter of support from a president, dean, or other authority, as evidence of institutional support, labeled and attached as "Attachments" in SAGE.

Describe the qualifications and time commitments of the Mentor/Sponsor commensurate with the proposed project. Describe their complementary and integrated expertise, leadership approach, governance, and organizational structure as appropriate for the project. Describe the specific roles, responsibilities, and expertise of the Mentor/Sponsor. Describe how the Mentor/Sponsor will be engaged in the development PI's independence through the proposed project. In addition, briefly present the PI's experience in ASD research. If the PI is new to autism research, indicate how it is proposed to acquire the knowledge necessary to put the proposed study into the appropriate context, whether through literature reviews, relevant experimental data, collaboration with established autism researchers, or other means.

F. **Candidate Goals:** Briefly describe how current experience and education impact both short- and long-term career goals. Give relevant examples and demonstrate how they increase the potential for a successful fellowship. In addition, candidates should discuss research areas and projects of interest and the potential of said research to transform the field of autism.

G. **Additional Funding:** Briefly describe any past or current funding for this or similar research studies and how this study will move the work forward.

H. **Literature:** Literature cited.

APPENDIX 3 – REVIEW CRITERIA – PREDOCTORAL/ POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIPS AND POSTDOCTORAL ASSOCIATE RESEARCH GRANTS (CAUT26GFP, CAUT26DFP, and CAUT26DAP)

A fellowship application has a research project that is integrated with the training plan. The review will emphasize the applicant's potential for a productive career, the applicant's need for the proposed training, and the degree to which the research project and training plan, the Mentor(s)/Supervisor(s), and the environment will satisfy those needs. Grant applications will be judged on scientific and technical merit, relevance to the IACC priorities, Council's mission, and public health.

The Independent Scientific Merit Review Panel will perform two levels of review:

1. Each panel member will review his/her assigned proposals for scientific and technical merit and significance and determine an initial score for each proposal.
2. The panel will then convene for group discussion and scoring.

The reviewers will consider the aspects below in order to judge the likelihood that the proposed research will have a substantial impact in the field of autism. Each of these criteria will be addressed and considered by the reviewers in assigning the overall score, weighting them as appropriate for each application. Note that the application does not need to be strong in all categories to be judged likely to have a major scientific impact and thus deserve a high priority score. For example, an investigator may propose to carry out important work that by its nature is not innovative but is essential to move the field forward.

<u>Scientific Rationale & Significance:</u>

- Is the research proposal relevant to the selected IACC priority?
- Does the research proposal address an important problem or a critical barrier to progress in the field?
- Is the prior research that serves as key support for the proposed project rigorous?
- Will the proposed project advance the current knowledge in ways that may improve clinical practice for patients with ASD?
- How will the successful completion of the aims change the concepts, methods, technologies, treatments, services, or preventive interventions for ASD? If the aims of the project are achieved, how will scientific knowledge, technical capability, and/or clinical practice be improved?
- If applicable, will the proposed project lead to an intervention that can be adopted and implemented in community settings should it prove effective? If the aims of the project are achieved, how will scientific knowledge, technical capability, and/or clinical practice be improved?

<u>Innovation:</u>

- Does the application challenge and seek to shift current research or clinical practice by utilizing novel theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation, or interventions?

- Is the proposed research innovative, including novel concepts, approaches, and/or methods?
- Does the application challenge and seek to shift current research or clinical practice paradigms?
- Are the concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation, or interventions novel to one field of research or novel in a broad sense?
- Does the application challenge and seek to shift current research or clinical practice paradigms?

Approach, Experimental Design and Capability:

- Is the proposed project adequate in terms of experimental design and analyses, anticipation of potential problems, consideration of alternative approaches and benchmarks for success?
- Does prior research and theory provide a rational basis for the proposed project?
- Have the investigators presented strategies to ensure a robust and unbiased approach, as appropriate for the work proposed?
- Does the design have adequate methodological quality and power to increase the likelihood of producing statistically sound conclusions?
- If there are flaws in the design and/or analyses, can they be remediated? If so, please indicate how.
- Have the investigators presented adequate plans to address relevant biological variables, such as sex, for studies in vertebrate animals or human subjects?
- Are potential ethical issues regarding research subjects adequately addressed? Is the protection of subjects appropriate considering 1) risk to subjects, 2) adequacy of protection against risks, 3) potential benefits to the subjects and others, 4) importance of the knowledge to be gained, and 5) data and safety monitoring for clinical trials?
- Animal Research Subjects (if applicable):
    - Are the descriptions of proposed procedures involving animals, including species, strains, ages, sex, and total number to be used detailed? Have interventions to minimize discomfort, distress, pain, and injury been identified?
    - Are justifications for the use of animals versus alternative models and for the appropriateness of the species proposed given?
    - Is justification for euthanasia method inconsistent with the AVMA Guidelines for the Euthanasia of Animals?
- Human Research Subjects (if applicable):
    - Is the process for obtaining informed consent or assent appropriate?
    - Are the plans for inclusion of children, minorities, and members of both sexes/genders justified in terms of the scientific goals and research strategy proposed?
    - Are the plans for recruitment outreach, enrollment, retention, handling dropouts, missed visits and losses to follow-up appropriate to ensure robust data collection?

Environment, Key Personnel:

- Are the qualifications, productivity, and time commitments of the Principal Investigator commensurate with the proposed project?
- Is the experience of the mentor/supervisor commensurate with the ability to sufficiently train the PI throughout the course of the proposed project?

- Are the proposed research project and training plan likely to provide the PI with the requisite individualized and mentored experiences needed to obtain the appropriate skills for a research career?
- Will the scientific environment in which the work will be done contribute to the probability of success?
- Is the proposed research project of high scientific quality, and is it well integrated with the proposed research training plan?
- Are the institutional support, equipment, and other physical resources available to the investigators adequate for the project proposed?
- Are the administrative, data coordinating, enrollment, and laboratories appropriate for the project proposed?
- Does the application adequately address the PI's capability to conduct the project at the proposed sites?

Budget:

- Is the budget reasonable and justified for the project proposed?
- Is there evidence of institutional commitment and/or cost sharing in the proposal?

Overall Impact:

- Reviewers will provide an overall impact score to reflect their assessment of the likelihood that the fellowship will enhance the applicant's potential for, and commitment to, a productive independent scientific research career in autism, in consideration of the scored and additional review criteria.

APPENDIX 4 – PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR AND MENTOR/SPONSOR REQUIREMENTS – PREDOCTORAL/ POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIPS AND POSTDOCTORAL ASSOCIATE RESEARCH GRANTS (CAUT26GFP, CAUT26DFP, and CAUT26DAP)

Requirements

- Principal Investigators shall comply with the submission of required progress and expenditure reports.
- Principal Investigators should use the National Institutes of Health, "Guidelines and Policies for the "Conduct of Research in the Intramural Research Program at NIH" to serve as a reference for fellows and trainees. These Guidelines and Policies can be found at: https://oir.nih.gov/sites/default/files/uploads/sourcebook/documents/ethical_conduct/guidelines-conduct_research.pdf
- All Principal Investigators shall notify and make available publication of their research in peer-reviewed journals and any pending patents to the Council.
- All Principal Investigators are subject to participate in scheduled Council meetings.

Mentor/Sponsor Requirements (Comments of Sponsor in the SAGE)

- All mentors/sponsors MUST be established, and they are apt to advance the applicant's career and project with evidence of a strong mentorship relationship.
- All mentors/sponsors MUST provide an individualized training plan on how they will support and assist the Principal Investigator, assistant, and/or fellow (1 to 2 paragraphs).
- All mentors/sponsors MUST include their Bio sketch.
- All mentors/sponsors should use the National Institutes of Health, "Guidelines and Policies for the "Conduct of Research in the Intramural Research Program at NIH" to serve as a reference for fellows and trainees. These Guidelines and Policies can be found at: https://oir.nih.gov/sites/default/files/uploads/sourcebook/documents/ethical_conduct/guidelines-conduct_research.pdf.

APPENDIX 5 – PAGE LIMITS & GRANT SUBMISSION CHECKLIST

Please refer to the following table to see the checklist of the required document(s) for each type of grant and the word/page limits. The page/character limits do not represent the expected length of the response. They are the **maximum** lengths allowed. If no page limit is listed in the table, you can assume the attachment does not have a limit.

The applicant MUST submit all attachments (including tables and graphs) in **Adobe pdf format** (not docx or other format) and ***concatenated***. The attached file must be labeled properly with appropriate Prefix file description. For example, the submission of a resume for a Basic Research grant would be e.g., CAUT25BRP_resume_ JacksonPhD, or Table 1 for Predoc would be CAUT25GFP_Table1_Brown. Any additional information must be uploaded to the "Attachment" section in SAGE and labeled accordingly (e.g., CAUT25CRP_FringeBenefits_DowningPhD in Schedule A, Part I – Personnel Costs).

The applications and attachments MUST follow these minimum requirements:

- **Text Color**: No restriction. Though not required, black or other high-contrast text colors are recommended since they print well and are legible to the largest audience.
- **Font size**: Must be 11 points or larger. Smaller text in figures, graphs, diagrams, and charts is acceptable, as long as it is legible when the page is viewed at 100%.
- **Font Type**: Arial, Calibri, Helvetica
- **Type density**: Must be no more than 15 characters per linear inch (including characters and spaces).
- **Line spacing**: Must be no more than six lines per vertical inch.
- **Format**: All files MUST be formatted in Adobe PDF and concatenated.

Document size is limited to 13MB.

Grant Submission Checklist (Page Limits & Requirements)

Section of Application (Page Limits)	ACP	BRP	CRP	Postdoc	Predoc
Research Project Type	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Organization Profile	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Project Contacts	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Grant Period and Payment	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Researcher Profile • Name of Researcher • Biosketch ***and*** CV (5 pages each personnel) • Research Experience (4,000 characters) • References – *pre and postdoc only* (2 Letters of Reference/Recommendation [excluding the Mentor/Supervisor])	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Description of Research Project • Project Title • Project Description (3 sentences [500 characters]) • Lay Abstract (1 page maximum [4,000 characters]) • Abstract and Proposal Narrative ○ Abstract (1 page maximum) ○ Specific aims (1 page) ○ Research Strategy (not to exceed 20 pages) ▪ Significance ▪ Preliminary Studies/Data ▪ Research Design ▪ Method/s for Enhancing Reproducibility (Translational Nature) Basic and Clinical Research ***only*** ○ References • Facilities (20,000 characters) • Major Equipment (20,000 characters) • Equipment Needs • Additional Information (20,000 characters)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Written response to reviewer critiques (when applicable)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Comments of Sponsor (for pre and post doc only) - not to exceed 6 pages • Name of Sponsor • Sponsor's Biosketch ***and*** CV (5 pages [max.] each) • Training Plans (8,000 characters) • Researcher Qualifications (4,000 characters) • Institutional Commitment (2,000 characters) • Career Development (2,000 characters) • Independent Research (2,000 characters) • Mentoring Process (4,000 characters) • Research Funding Support of Sponsor (16,000 characters)	N/A	N/A	N/A	✓	✓
Schedule A, Part 1 – Personnel Costs Budget Year 1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Schedule A, Part 1 – Personnel Costs Budget Year 2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Section of Application (Page Limits)	ACP	BRP	CRP	Postdoc	Predoc
Schedule A, Part 1 – Personnel Costs Budget Year 3 (Clinical Research and Postdoc ***only***)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Schedule B – Other Direct Costs Budget Year 1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Schedule B – Other Direct Costs Budget Year 2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Schedule B – Other Direct Costs Budget Year 3 (Clinical Research and Postdoc ***only***)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cost Summary	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Disclosures and Certifications	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Additional Certifications for Research Applicants	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Suggested Reviewers (not applicable for FY2025 grants)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
FFATA Certification	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Attachments • Organizational Letter of Support • Board of Directors/Trustees • NJ Charities Registration • Budget Justification • Annual Audit Report • Proof of Nonprofit Status • Proof of Indirect Rate • Audit Engagement Letter • Tax clearance Certificate • Salary Policy • Travel Policy • Computer Policy • Telephone/Mobile Communication Policy • Human Subjects and Genomics Policy • IRB policy • Statement of Local Governmental Public Health Partnership • Proof of U.S. Citizen or legal resident (for Predoctoral Fellowship Grant only)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

APPENDIX 6 - INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING SAGE GRANT APPLICATION

Initiate a Grant Application in SAGE

1. Click the "Manage My Organization's Account" link to view and update your organization's system profile and user accounts.
2. Click the program name underneath “Start a New Grant Application” button to begin the process to complete your grant application (Autism Postdoctoral Fellowship Research 2026).
3. Select “I Agree” to begin the application process.
4. In the “Forms” section of the left navigation pane, select “Research Project Type” form, and using the appropriate checkbox in the indicate the type of grant you are seeking (Postdoctoral Fellowship [Autism or Cancer] / Predoctoral/Graduate Fellowship [Autism or Cancer]).
5. If your application is a resubmission, select yes and proceed as required while saving your information.
6. In order to fill in the information in the “Organization Profile” form, you must select the check box located at the end and then hit “Save” to populate the information.
7. As you continue through the application, hit “Save” to save your information and check for any errors that need to be corrected before moving to the next form. Then hit “Next Form”.
   - Note: You may also use the left navigation pane to command each form of the application.
8. Using left navigation pane is the best way to view which (if any) pages contain errors that will prevent you from submitting your application.
9. If you skip or miss a field that requires information input, you will be informed that you need to reenter the form to correct the mistake by either amending or adding the required information. SAGE will not allow you to submit your application if a mistake is detected.
10. **PLEASE NOTE**, you will not be able to submit your application unless all forms are populated with the required information.
11. If any information is missing, **an exclamation mark (!)** will appear in the left navigation pane indicating the page(s) that must be corrected before submission can occur.
12. As a reminder, you ***must*** have all attachments uploaded upon submission of your application. Organizational Letters of Support must be uploaded into the “Attachments” section of the application. *The Council will not contact references for their letters*.
13. In order to submit your application, scroll to the bottom of the left navigation pane and select “Application Submitted.”
14. If you encounter any problems completing your SAGE application, please contact the SAGE Help Desk Monday through Friday, 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM; (609) 376-8508 or njdoh.grants@doh.nj.gov.

APPENDIX 7 - PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS AND GENOMICS INFORMATION

Compliance with NIH regulations for the protection of human subjects, and the inclusion of women, children and minorities in clinical studies is required for all applicants.

The Council requires compliance with NIH, the HHS Office for Human Research Protections, and institutional guidelines defined for the protection of human subjects in research. Violations of these regulations and guidelines must be reported and reviewed by the appropriate institutions and the Council, including but not limited to IRB overseeing the research, the associated institution, and the laboratory's senior scientist.

The Council shall have the right to arrange for observation and/or auditing without prior notice of any research activity and research records associated with research funded by the Council. It is the responsibility of the applicant as a potential recipient of a Council grant to assure that the rights and welfare of all human subjects used in any Council-Mentored research are protected. Any applications involving human subjects must be reviewed and approved by the appropriate IRB. IRB approval must be obtained before patient enrollment can start, at the latest by the end of the first year.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to share human data with the NIMH Data Archive (NDA) if compatible with the design of the pilot project. The NDA has sample language for informed consent, as well as other resources.