

# Emerging Investigator Guided Research Small Grants Program



## About the Emerging Investigator Program

The goal of the Emerging Investigator Guided Research Small Grants Program is to build capacity of investigators experienced in CYSHCN research, help establish a track record of published research, and increase the likelihood of future funding. In accordance with the mission and vision, the Systems and Policy Research Network for Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs & Their Families offers this grant funding opportunity to emerging investigators.

**Up to 3 projects** will be funded up to a maximum of **\$15,000** over a **one-year** period. Applications are accepted from **doctoral level** investigators **within 5 years of training** based at any U.S. academic institution in any discipline.

## About the Network

The Systems and Policy Research Network for Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs & Their Families strives to maximize the health, well-being, and quality of life of children and youth with special health care needs and their families by conducting collaborative and rigorous research, engaging lived experience partners, integrating care systems, and prioritizing a family-centered approach – with the ultimate goal of driving policy and health system change.

*This project is supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) under UA6MC31101 Children with Special Health Care Needs Research Network. This information or content and conclusions are those of the author and should not be construed as the official position or policy of, nor should any endorsements be inferred by HRSA, HHS or the U.S. Government.*

## Proposals

Research related to the health and well-being of children and youth with special health care needs (CYSHCN) will be considered, especially with a focus on the following priorities: Quality of Life, Family Well-Being, Family Engagement, and Integrated Care Systems. Applications demonstrating close linkages to the above priorities and those describing how the research may lead to changes in policy and practice are highly encouraged.



Get more information at our webinar on Wednesday, May 13th at 10 am, Central Time. [Register here.](#)

Contact



[Dtchampion@wisc.edu](mailto:Dtchampion@wisc.edu)

Apply



[SPRNetwork.org/emerging-investigator-program](https://SPRNetwork.org/emerging-investigator-program)

## Applicant Eligibility

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Emerging Investigators have completed doctoral-level training and are typically in one of the following groups:

- Junior faculty, fellows, residents, or early career investigators from any discipline that serves CYSHCN e.g. nurses, social workers, physicians, pharmacists, social scientists, public health professionals, etc.
- Faculty members no more than 5 years out from completion of all training (fellowship or post-doc)
- More experienced clinicians / investigators who are new to the field of CYSHCN research (with documentation about their change of career focus; evidence of commitment to health systems research for CYSHCN is required)

Applicants from any U.S. academic institution that serves children and youth with special health care needs may apply.

Preference is given to those proposals that have the potential to lead to larger, longer-term outcomes, as well as to candidates who have the potential to integrate their work into the ongoing health systems research for CYSHCN, especially as it relates to SPRNetwork's priority areas; Quality of Life, Family Well-Being, Family Engagement, and Integrated Care Systems. Our goal is to maintain long-term engagement with candidates into the future.

## Family Engagement

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Every application must include one or more CYSHCN family, youth partner, or individual with lived experience, along with a description of the investigator's work with the partner to date. If needed, SPRNetwork's family engagement partner, Family Voices, can provide guidance and assistance in connecting you to a youth and/or family partner. Contact Andrea Li at [ali@familyvoices.org](mailto:ali@familyvoices.org) for additional information.

Please submit the following information about your intended partners to the best of your ability. If your proposal is funded, these materials will be required before the release of funding.

- At least one youth or family partner must be named prior to receiving funding.
- Please have your partners submit a short biography in their own words about their lived experience and any relevant experience.
- Please include a role description signed by the partners. A sample template is provided in this document.
- Partner(s) must complete the research partner training (available at [PORCCH.ca](http://PORCCH.ca)) prior to receiving funding. A certificate of completion must be provided. Training is online, free, and takes about 4 hours to complete, and can be done at the partner's own pace. The 4 hours of training will be reimbursed at a rate of \$50/hr.

## Application Instructions

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### Application Requirements

Applications for the Emerging Investigators program are submitted online. The [online submission form](#) requires:

- Project title and three-sentence narrative description
- Primary contacts and institutional information
- PI Biosketch (upload)
- Mentor letter of support (upload)
- Proposal narrative (upload)
- References (upload)
- Budget and Budget Justification document (upload)
- Completed family partner role description (upload)
- Agreements regarding family engagement and participation in the program activities
  - Commitment to participate in the SPRNetwork Guided Research program and didactic sessions
  - Commitment from your family/youth partners to participate in the family partner quarterly meetings (family/youth partners will be paid \$50/hour for 4 hours of participation)
  - Commitment to complete PORCCH trainings ([www.PORCCH.ca](http://www.PORCCH.ca)) for both PI and family/youth partners (certificate of completion must be submitted before funds can be released; family/youth partner will be paid \$50/hour for 4 hours of participation)

### Completing the Application

Applications must be completed by the deadline specified, following the instructions of the Request for Applications, and specifically relate to research about CYSHCN.

### Important Dates

- Application deadline: July 1st at 5pm Central Time
- Letters or emails confirming project status will be sent by August 1.
- Funding is provided from September 1 of the award year through August 31 of the following year.
- Prior to funding, the following must be in place:
  - IRB approval (if applicable)
  - Family partner must complete research methods training on [www.PORCCH.ca](http://www.PORCCH.ca) by October 1 of the award year.
  - PI must complete the PI module of the PORCCH training.
  - Certificate of completion for PORCCH trainings must be submitted with the application or by October 1 to the network manager.

### Review Process

Applications will be reviewed by a review panel consisting of CYSHCN expert investigators, policy and practice experts, and lived experience partners.

## About the EI Program

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### Awards

- Up to three projects will be awarded on a competitive basis pending approval of funding
- The budget period is from September 1 of the award year through August 31 of the following year.
- The maximum award is \$15,000 and includes:
  - \$1,500 toward travel expenses to present findings at a regional or national conference for the awardee. The family partner may be included in the travel.
  - \$700 to cover bimonthly meetings, four (4) quarterly 1-hour meetings, and four (4) hours of PORCCH training @ \$50/hr for the youth/family partner.

Allowable expenses include all relevant project expenses, including:

- Contract services, not to include salary or fringe benefits
- Supplies and small specialized equipment
- Computer purchase not to exceed \$1,000 (must document necessity)
- Domestic travel required to conduct research
- Payment to youth/family partner



**I am so grateful for this funding - I have received invaluable training from well-respected clinician-researchers nationwide and have maintained meaningful connections with mentors and fellow early career investigators.**



### Evaluations

A brief evaluation survey will be sent to you and your family/youth partner and mentors. This survey helps us improve our support of your project and improve our program overall. It is due at 6 months from the beginning of the project.

A second evaluation survey will be sent to you and your family/youth partner and mentors and is due within 30 days of the end of the project year. This survey helps us improve the program for the next cohort.

### Final Written Report

A final written report is due 3 months after the end of the project in manuscript form documenting presentations, publications, and outside funding that resulted from this award. An abstract written in non-technical language should also be submitted for publication on the SPRNetwork website.

### Acknowledgement of Support

Support from the SPRNetwork Emerging Investigators Guided Research Program must be acknowledged in all publications and presentations along with the following language: "This project is supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) under grant number UA6MC31101 Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs Research Network. This information or content and conclusions are those of the author and should not be construed as the official position or policy of, nor should any endorsements be inferred by HRSA, HHS or the U.S. Government."

## Proposal Checklist

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This checklist is for applicant use only to ensure all materials are completed in the acceptable format. **This checklist should not be submitted with the initial proposal application.**

The proposal must be no more than six, single-spaced pages using Arial 11 point font with 1" page margins. Each applicant must include the following in their initial proposal submission:

- Tentative project title
- Background/literature review and preliminary studies (if applicable)
- Specific aims: up to 1 page, including the research question, hypotheses (if appropriate), and purpose of the study
- Proposed method(s) and analysis plan, including a plan for how family partners will be engaged in the project
- Significance: Relevance to CYSHCN, including how the findings will address a gap in the literature and how the project is relevant to health systems including the SPRNetwork National Research Agenda, and health policy and practice (these can be woven together)
- A statement explaining how participation in SPRNetwork will enhance your career goals
- Timeline for the study (no longer than 12 months)
- Preliminary anticipated project deliverables (to include an academic manuscript and a plain language project summary, but may also include family-facing summary, infographic, policy summary, clinical practice recommendation, etc.)

### Not included in page count

These materials are submitted as uploads in the online submission form.

- Budget and Budget Justification, which should include:
  - Overhead (indirect costs) if applicable. Please note that SPRNetwork caps indirect costs at 26%.
  - Description of key personnel, including the youth and/or family partners
- PI [Biographical sketch](#) (not to exceed four pages)
- Family/youth partner role description (template included in this document)
- References
- IRB approval or copy of submitted application, if applicable (IRB approval must be obtained before funds can be released)
- Mentor's letter of support, including ability to complete the project within 12 months, the applicant's potential as a researcher, the potential for future funding, and the mentor's commitment to the applicant

**Please note:** Incomplete submissions and application materials that exceed the requested page limits will not be considered for review.

## Evaluation Criteria

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- Is the study appropriate to a CYSHCN population?
- Are the data collection and analysis feasible in the time frame proposed?
- Does the study address an important health systems problem?
- Does the study address a gap in research?
- Is the study timely?
- Are the methods appropriate to answer the research question?
- Does the study fit with the SPRNetwork National Research Agenda? (See Academic Pediatrics Vol. 22, Issue 2, Supplement S1–S46 Published in issue: March 2022)
- Does the study fit with the research network's priorities?
- Is there a clear path between study results and policy or practice change for CYSHCN?
- Is there an attainable family/youth leader involvement component?
- Are there any ethical concerns?
- Can the study be completed with the available funding?
- Does the investigator commit to participation in the SPRNetwork Guided Research program and didactic sessions?

**NOTE:** Emerging Investigator awards are directly funded by HRSA/MCHB, and therefore, projects must comply with all applicable terms and conditions as outlined in the Notice of Award (NOA) and Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) as well as current Executive Orders.

## Frequently Asked Questions

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### Eligibility

#### What is the definition of an Emerging Investigator?

SPRNetwork Emerging Investigators are defined as:

- Junior faculty, fellows, residents, or early career investigators who are no more than 5 years out from completion of all training as of the date proposals are due (fellowship or post-doc)
- Experienced investigators who are new to the field

#### Who can apply?

Eligible individuals from any academic institution in the U.S. are eligible to apply.

#### Does the Emerging Investigators Program accept applications from applicants who are not physicians?

Yes. We encourage nurses, psychologists, social workers, social scientists, engineers, and other professionals to apply.

#### Can two applicants from the same institution submit proposals to the Emerging Investigators Program?

Yes, however, only one proposal from each institution will be considered for the award.

#### Can more than one person be a PI on a project?

Yes, a project can have multiple co-investigators; however, the award will be up to \$15,000 per project.

#### Can previous awardees apply?

No, but previous applicants who are still eligible are encouraged to reapply.

#### Are there opportunities to participate in the program if my project is not funded?

Yes, you can participate in monthly sessions.

### Proposals & Application Process

#### How do I access the application?

The application is accessible on the SPRNetwork website, [www.SPRNetwork.org](http://www.SPRNetwork.org). No log-in is necessary.

#### Should checklists be submitted with the initial and full proposals?

No, your application checklist is intended to ensure you prepare all necessary materials and should not be submitted.

#### Where do I send my proposal?

Please submit all materials through the email referenced in the application.

#### What format should use for my biosketch?

The biosketch should use the [standard NIH biosketch format](#) and may not exceed four pages. The NIH biosketch includes a Personal Statement. As part of this statement, please describe how the proposal relates to and will help to facilitate the investigator's career path for this purpose as it relates to the proposed research agenda. Please include a biosketch for both the applicant and primary mentor. Do not include a CV.

## Mentors

### Will a mentor be assigned to me or do I find my own mentor?

Both. You should have a mentor from your institution. The Network will also pair you with a mentor who is an expert in CYSHCN research.

### What is the role of the SPRNetwork mentor?

The SPRNetwork mentor will help you with issues directly related to CYSHCN research including data sets, methods, specific literature, health systems information relating to CYSHCN, and career information in CYSHCN research.

## Budget

### Is travel to a regional or national conference required?

You are required to submit an abstract to a conference. If it is accepted, the Network will fund up to \$1,500 of travel expenses for you. These funds include conference registration and are part (10%) of your total award. Funds may also be applied for your youth/family partner's travel. If your institution does not allow travel or if conferences are virtual, the funds may be spent on other project expenses. The amount is meant to offset total registration and travel expenses, not to fully fund travel and registration.

### My institution requires that I include indirect costs. Is this acceptable?

Indirect costs are capped at 26%.

### Can I include myself or my mentor in the budget to cover time spent on the project?

Neither an applicant nor mentor may have effort.

### Can I include funds for a statistician in my budget?

Yes, direct costs for statisticians are acceptable, as long as they are properly justified in the submitted proposal; however, SPRNetwork has statisticians on staff who can help with your project. You should consult with the SPRNetwork program manager about your need for statisticians and the scope of the work that you expect them to perform. You may be able to get statistics help at no cost.

## Orientation

### Will there be an orientation to the program?

Yes. In fact, there will be 2 mandatory orientations:

- General orientation to the program
- Orientation for you and your family partner to familiarize them with your study

## Youth and Family Involvement

### How should I involve youth and/or families in my study?

Youth and families of CYSHCN should be engaged as full partners (co-investigators) in your project. They should have the opportunity to participate in the design of the study, if possible, and they should be consulted about the project at every step of the way. Having youth and/or families as respondents only is not sufficient. Specific questions about how to involve families/caregivers should be directed to the SPRNetwork program manager. The role description form in this application can help you and your youth/family partner craft appropriate roles and expectations.

## Should my youth or family partner be paid?

Yes, you should set aside funds to pay your youth or family partner for their time. SPRNetwork has [written guidelines for paying youth and family partners](#). There is a version for both PIs and families, including a version in Spanish. You should become familiar with this document and ensure that your family partner has a copy of the family version. We recognize that with the limited funds of this grant it may be difficult to pay your partners according to the guidelines, so we can connect you to our Family Voices partners who can help you set up an appropriate budget.

## How often should I consult with my youth/family partners?

Regular contact with your youth/family partner (at least once/month) throughout the study is essential in taking advantage of their lived experience. SPRNetwork requires that you begin your collaboration with your youth/family partner within one month of the grant year, that is, no later than October 1 of the grant year. Ideally, however, you should begin collaboration from the beginning of your project.

## What else should I know about working with a youth or family partner?

Having an advisory committee of youth and/or families, while worthwhile, does not meet the requirement of having a youth and/or family partner who is embedded in your study. Through our Family Voices partner, SPRNetwork supports you and your youth/family partner relationship throughout your project. We expect that you will consult with your youth or family partner as an integral part of your study, that is, your partner(s) should be involved at every level as you would with any co-PI.

## Publication and Data

### Am I required to share data with the Network?

No. The Network is currently not a data repository.

### How will findings be disseminated?

At least one paper submission to a peer-reviewed journal is expected. Findings may also be posted on the Network's website and/or other social media platforms. The PI is expected to translate the abstract into non-technical language that is accessible to the broader community of stakeholders, for publication on the Network's website. We will also ask for a short narrative to put on the website.

### Are reports due to the Network?

Yes. Since the Network is funded by the Maternal Child Health Bureau, reports are required. A form will be sent to you by the Network Program Manager with complete instructions and due dates.

## Transferring Institutions

### I am transferring institutions. What is the process for transferring my award funds?

Please notify SPRNetwork of institutional changes via written notice on institutional letterhead. Include your name, contact information, project title, funding track, and the contact information of the administrator handling your award funds at your current institution. Any unused funds at your current institution should be returned via check to the SPRNetwork Central Office by mail.

The written notice may be sent by email to [ragrawal@luriechildrens.org](mailto:ragrawal@luriechildrens.org).

SPRNetwork will disburse your remaining award funds after receipt of payment information for your new institution. Please note this may take a couple of months, pending your institution's internal processes.

Mentorship relationship after transfer should be verified.

- Will you keep the same mentor? What level of commitment will s/he be able to provide? If you secure a new mentor, s/he should send a letter with information on the level of commitment to the project that s/he is able to provide.

## References

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Brown, T. W., McLellan, S. E., Scott, J. A., & Mann, M. Y. (2022). Introducing the Blueprint for Change: A National Framework for a System of Services for Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs. *Pediatrics*, 149(Supplement 7), e2021056150B. <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2021-056150B>

Stille, C. J., Coller, R. J., Shelton, C., Wells, N., Desmarais, A., & Berry, J. G. (2022). National Research Agenda on Health Systems for Children and Youth With Special Health Care Needs. *Academic Pediatrics*, 22(2S), S1–S6. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acap.2021.12.022>



I really appreciated the ongoing support of mentors in this program - particularly as I submitted a K01 to AHRQ in February 2025. The mentorship in this program is invaluable, and an aspect of the program that I often share when asked about SPRNetwork.



Working with [the lived experience partner] has been one of the most meaningful experiences in my career. She continually reinforced the need for lived experience partners to elicit meaningful change in this field.



## Budget Instructions

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For each budget item, please provide the following information using the budget template provided:

- The requested dollar amount (up to \$15,000)\*.
  - Specify how the funds are allocated (see template below)
  - Provide a justification for each expense.
  - Conference registration at a national or regional conference relevant to CYSHCN project to present findings for investigator and their family partner.
- Include only the amount requested from the SPRNetwork under the amount requested column.
  - Note: SPRNetwork caps overhead (indirect costs) at 26%.
  - SPRNetwork will not fund salary for the PI or mentors.
- Include any in-kind contributions or expenses that will be covered under a different grant in the in-kind column.
- Allocate at least \$700 for one family/youth partner to cover bimonthly meetings, four (4) quarterly 1-hour meetings, and four (4) hours of PORCCH training @ \$50/hr for the youth/family partner. Additional time for work on project should be budgeted above this floor.

Budgets are evaluated based on:

- Whether they are within the funding limits.
- Whether the resources are appropriate for the work proposed.
- Appropriate compensation for youth/family partners, based on their expected roles.

Projects with budgets that exceed the specified limit from SPRNetwork will not be reviewed.

The sample budget table includes many common categories but is not exhaustive. Additional categories may be considered, provided they are not explicitly excluded from the award.

**Travel:** This award permits up to \$1,500 for up to two attendees including investigator and family partner towards presenting findings at a national or regional conference\*. Local travel may be justified for projects involving primary data collection, provided applicant has other funding sources for conference travel. The amount is meant to offset actual travel expenses, not necessarily to cover all costs of attending a conference.

**Equipment purchases:** Equipment, including up to \$1,000 for purchase of computer, is allowed if justification supports project-related needs.

\* If travel is not allowable or feasible, or if professional conferences are scheduled to be virtual, the funds may be spent on other aspects of the project.

## Budget Template

Item	Detail	In-kind (optional)	Amount requested from SPRNetwork	Total Amount	Justification
Research Assistant	rate/hour number of hours OR percent effort duration; tasks				
Youth and/or family partner	\$50 rate/hour number of hours OR percent effort duration; tasks (A total of \$700 for trainings and meetings)				
Equipment	Project-specific equipment such as digital recorder for qualitative data collection				
Transcription	rate time number of subjects				
Remuneration for study participants	amt/subject number of subjects				
Postage	amt /mailing number of mailings				
Software, type	number of licenses				
Supplies	specify				
Consultant(s)	time and role				
Local travel	miles/trip number of trips Fed rate				
Conference travel*	max \$1500				
TOTAL					

## Family Partner Role Description

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The Systems & Policy Research Network for Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs and Their Families (SPRNetwork) works to understand how to improve the healthcare system for children with special healthcare needs and their families. One way the network does this is by training newer people in this research called the Emerging Investigators program. As a part of this program, each person doing research (Investigator) must have a person with lived experience working on a research project as their family partner. Family partners can help make sure that research matters to the people who interact with the healthcare system to treat a disability for themselves or their child. In addition, family partners will also have support from Family Voices and a chance to connect with other family partners working on other research projects.

Please share this role description with your family partner. If you both agree with the role description, please sign and date the document below and upload it to your SPRNetwork Emerging Investigator Program application.

### Project Overview

Describe the research project in plain language. For more information about plain language, please see [Family Voices' Plain Language Checklist](#).

### Timeline

Describe the proposed project timeline.

### Opportunity for Family Partner

Describe the research team and the role that family partners will play within the research team.

### **Duties and Responsibilities**

Describe, in as much detail as possible and in plain language, the activities and expectations of the family partner, including an estimate of how many hours the partner should anticipate participating in an activity and any necessary equipment the partner should have access to (e.g., Internet connection, etc.).

### **Compensation and Reimbursement**

List the compensation amount, frequency, and mechanism for payment. Please list if transportation, childcare, or any other resources will be paid for or reimbursed.

### **Additional Requirements**

If the investigator's application is accepted into the Emerging Investigators program, family partners will be required to:

- Complete a 4-hour online training about an introduction to research, which can be completed at the partner's own pace.
- Attend, to the best of their ability, bi-monthly meetings with Family Voices to check in about the research project, connect with other family partners, and learn together.

**Investigator:** I have shared and explained this job description with my family partner and made any necessary revisions. We both agree on their role and participation in the research project.

**Investigator Name:**

**Investigator Signature:**

**Date:**

**Family Partner Name:**

**Family Partner Signature:**

**Date:**