

The Minority Fellowship Program

The Minority Fellowship Program (MFP), established 30 years ago, provides federal training grants to increase the numbers of ethnic minority psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, and nurses. Given the high cost of graduate education, the financial support provided by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) is vital to help ensure that minorities have access to culturally sensitive and effective mental health services. SAMHSA's MFP is part of the Best Practices program within its Programs of Regional and National Significance.

The Surgeon General's Report, *Mental Health: Culture, Race, and Ethnicity* (2001), as well as the more recent report of the President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health (2003), concluded that our nation's mental health system needs to recruit, retain, and enhance an ethnically, culturally, and linguistically competent mental health workforce. The federal government has yet to effectively meet this critical challenge.

Funding History

Prior to FY 2001, the MFP funding level was set at \$1 million for many years. In FY 2001, the budget was tripled to \$3 million – still far below what is needed. Although the Senate Labor-Health and Human Services (HHS)-Education Appropriations Subcommittee has included report language emphasizing the importance of increasing the training opportunities for ethnic minority mental health professionals, no additional funding has since been appropriated.

Need for Increased Advocacy

The APA urges Congress to provide \$6 million in FY 2005 for the MFP. Although minorities currently represent 30% of our nation's population and are projected to account for 40% in 2025, only 16% of doctorates in psychology in 2001, for instance, were awarded to minorities. The increased funding level would also allow for a new component to train minority mental health professionals to work with children and adolescents, less than one-fifth of who receive the mental health services they need.

Democratic members, especially Representative Jesse Jackson Jr. (D-IL), of the House Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Subcommittee have been supportive of the MFP. The major challenge is to urge Subcommittee Chairman Ralph Regula (R-OH) and other Republican members to specially target \$6 million to SAMHSA to support the MFP.

On the Senate side, Senator Daniel Inouye (D-HI) has been very supportive of the MFP and has championed the need to train ethnic minorities, especially Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders. Concerted outreach to members of the Senate Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Subcommittee is critical if additional funds are to be appropriated and targeted to training minority mental health professionals.

