



New Jersey Autism Center for Excellence (NJACE)  
Post-Doctoral Fellowship Request for Applications  
(RFA) 2025

Important dates:

|                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| <b>March 21<sup>st</sup>, 2025</b> | <b>Letter of Intent Due (Required)</b> |
| <b>May 16<sup>th</sup>, 2025</b>   | <b>Application Due</b>                 |
| <b>August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025</b> | <b>Notice of Award</b>                 |

## Program overview (NJACE)

The NJACE grant was awarded to Children's Specialized Hospital (PI: Wayne Fisher) in July 2023, with a subcontract to Rutgers University. In addition, Autism New Jersey is a collaborating institution. The goals of the NJACE are to improve health outcomes of New Jersey residents at all life stages with a focus on community-oriented research and training tailored to the autism community and their needs. This includes both basic research focused on understanding biological or environmental variables that may improve ASD outcomes in the future and clinical research focused on improving outcomes for ASD individuals.

## Grant Information

The goal of the NJACE postdoctoral fellowship award is to support the training and development of promising young researchers in the field of autism. That is, this award aims to develop and/or enhance a research training opportunity for a post-doctoral individual in the field of autism. The grant will be awarded to post-doctoral fellow who receives high-quality mentorship from an experienced and independent researcher.

Each proposed application should describe how the postdoctoral fellow will engage in rigorous research and training activities to help trainees develop:

- **Critical and independent thinking skills:** The ability to come up with original research ideas and approaches that advance our understanding of autism.
- **Deep understanding of autism spectrum disorder (ASD):** Knowledge of ASD and how their research can contribute to improving health outcomes.
- **Strong scientific foundation:** Expertise in research design, methods, data analysis, and interpretation.
- **Safe and ethical research practices:** Ability to conduct autism research responsibly and with integrity.
- **Teamwork and collaboration:** Working effectively with diverse colleagues and fostering a collaborative research environment.
- **Effective communication:** Ability to clearly disseminate research methods and findings to a variety of audiences (scientists, other fields, and the public).
- **Career preparation:** Gain the skills and experience needed for a successful career in autism research.

Specifically, the NJACE is interested in providing seed grants to faculty conducting basic or clinical research relevant to improving our understanding of, or ability to treat ASD. Further, applications that involve an interdisciplinary team of researchers will be prioritized.

## Eligibility

Postdoctoral fellows mentored by full-time faculty at Qualified Research Institutions in New Jersey: Only those employed by entities credentialed as a qualified research institution in the State of New Jersey may apply for a postdoctoral fellowship grant. 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.

## **Number of grants available**

For this funding period, one post-doctoral seed grant will be awarded. The grant will support up to \$75,000 for one year.

## **Letter of Intent**

A letter of intent (LOI) is required prior to submission of the application. The letter of intent will be a short document, not to exceed one single-spaced page, describing the project and PI using the LOI template provided in Appendix A.

## **Application**

The requirements for the full application are provided in Appendix B.

## **Budget preparation**

Budgets must detail all costs including personnel costs for the trainee and should NOT include fringe rate or indirect cost calculations as they are NOT allowed for fellowship grants. Trainee should not spend more than 10% on teaching activities.

## **Review process**

All applications will be reviewed in accordance with the process described below. The determination of awards will be made through a two-step process:

1. Administrative review:

Upon receipt, all grant applications will be reviewed by the NJACE administrative team for compliance with the outlined regulations in this RFA, and to ensure completeness and accuracy. If the grant application needs correction due to a budgetary issue, the applicant will be contacted to provide a revised budget. If the NJACE administrative team determines that the application does not meet the administrative requirements, the application will be denied and will not be forwarded to the next phase, independent scientific review.

2. Independent scientific review:

The NJACE will identify a committee of reviewers based on the number of grant applications and the content of those applications. The review committees will be tasked with determining the relevance of all applications to the priorities of the NJACE, before evaluating the applications on the significance of the application to critical areas of need and feasibility. Based on these reviews, the committee will make funding recommendations to the NJACE administrative team.

The NJACE administrative team will receive the applications triaged by the review committees along with their recommendations. The NJACE will make the final funding decisions, considering the mission, priorities, and critical areas of need.

Post-doctoral fellow seed grant applications will be reviewed according to the following criteria:

1. Significance of the proposed training program and goals.
2. Innovation.
3. Feasibility and adequacy of the procedures to be used in training the post-doctoral fellow.
4. Evidence of experience of the PI and staff in the proposed training area.
5. Reasonableness of the budget in relation to the objectives, methods, approach, and training procedures proposed.

### **Post-award reporting**

At the conclusion of the review process, all applicants will be formally notified of the outcome of their application as soon as possible but no later than August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025 via a letter of intent to fund or a letter of denial.

### **Questions**

For any questions, reach out to the NJACE at [NJACE@childrens-specialized.org](mailto:NJACE@childrens-specialized.org).

## Appendix A: Letter of Intent Form

New Jersey Autism Center for Excellence (NJACE)

Seed Grant Letter of Intent for 2025

**Funding Opportunity:**  Research Seed Grant       Training Seed Grant  
 Plus-1 Seed Grant       Postdoctoral Fellowship Grant

**Principal Investigator (PI):** Fill Here

**PI Address:** Fill Here

**PI Email:** Fill Here

**PI Telephone:** Fill Here

**Project Collaborators (if applicable):** Fill Here

**Fellowship Mentor(s)/Supervisor(s):** Fill Here

**Participating Institutions and Organizations (including FEIN#):** Fill Here

### Project Overview

**Descriptive Title of the Project Proposed:** Fill Here

**Specific IACC Question Addressed in Proposed Project (selected from Appendix 1):** Fill Here

**Significance:** Fill Here

**Specific Aims:** Fill Here

**Approach:** Fill Here

## Appendix B: Application Instructions

- Font: Arial 11 point. (A smaller type size may be used for figures and graphs but must be legible.)
- Margins: Use at least one-half inch margins (top, bottom, left and right) for all pages.
- Proposal must be submitted to NJACE@childrens-specialized.org as a single PDF file and titled: LastName\_FirstName\_PostDoc\_NJACE2025.pdf
- Format and order of documents must be strictly adhered to. Submissions that do not meet the following guidelines, will be returned without review.
- Submissions must include
  - **NIH Biosketch for PI and key personnel**
    - Use format currently required by NIH.
    - Include Other Support
    - List all external and internal research support regardless of relevance to this application, including pending applications. Give grant number, title, duration, amount for current year, total value of award, and source of support.
  - **Scientific Abstract**
    - Limited to 250 words
  - **Lay Abstract**
    - Limit to 250 words using simple, everyday words and sentences.
  - **Specific Aims**
    - Limited to one page
  - **Post-Doc Research and Training Strategy**
    - Limited to 6 pages (not including references, budget, and budget justification)
    - Sections include (See for detailed suggestions)
      - Significance
      - Innovation
      - Approach (include expected outcomes & measurement)
  - **Literature Cited**
  - **Budget**
    - The awarded funds should be used to cover the postdoctoral fellow's salary. Funds cannot be used for memberships, food, drink, lodging, the purchase of books or subscriptions, or travel to meetings of professional

societies (unless the investigator is presenting research supported by the grant **and Travel cannot Exceed \$2500 per year.**).

- **Budget Justification**

- The budget justification should describe how the postdoctoral fellow's time will be allocated to training and mentored research activities described in the application.