



National Institutes of Health  
*Eunice Kennedy Shriver*  
National Institute of Child Health and Human Development

## Employee Orientation and Awareness Program



# NICHD History, Mission, and Vision

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Welcome to National Institutes of Health *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute Child Health and Human Development! This document will provide you with a brief look into the history, mission, and vision of the Institute. Be sure to visit the Web sites referenced below for in-depth information.

## History

Before the NICHD was established, a research field that focused on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDDs) was virtually non-existent. In 1961, a task force on the health and well-being of children was formed. The task force pointed out that research into the physical, intellectual, and emotional growth of children was sorely lacking, and called for the founding of a centralized unit, whose sole purpose was to launch concentrated research into disorders of human development, including IDDs.

With the impetus from the task force report, congress established a new Institute, the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development within the NIH in 1962. With Presidential support, the NICHD became a funding source for research on birth defects and IDDs, opened the doors to a new field of study on medical school campuses, created a new pediatrics specialty, and established IDDs as a recognized field of research. The NICHD became the first NIH Institute to focus on the entire life process, rather than on a specific disease or illness. Since its founding in 1962, the NICHD has achieved an impressive array of scientific advances in its pursuit to enhance lives throughout all stages of human development, from preconception through adulthood, improving the health of children, adults, families, communities, and populations.

- ▶ Visit the NICHD Web site at <http://www.nichd.nih.gov/about/overview/history/index.cfm> and the NIH Almanac at <http://www.nih.gov/about/almanac/organization/NICHD.htm> for more information about NICHD's history and accomplishments.

## Mission

The mission of the *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) is to ensure that every person is born healthy and wanted, that women suffer no harmful effects from the reproductive process, that all children have the chance to fulfill their potential to live healthy and productive lives free from disease or disability, and to ensure the health, productivity, independence, and well-being of all people through optimal rehabilitation.

In pursuit of this mission, the NICHD conducts and supports laboratory research, clinical trials, and epidemiological studies that explore health processes; examines the impact of disabilities,

diseases, and defects on the lives of individuals; and sponsors training programs for scientists, doctors, and researchers to ensure that NICHD research can continue.

### **NICHD's Scientific Vision: The Next Decade**

The NICHD, in collaboration with external stakeholders, is in the process of identifying the most promising scientific opportunities of the next decade across the breadth of the Institute's mission. The desired outcome of this process is a Vision Statement that will chart an ambitious but achievable scientific vision for the NICHD and its research communities.

- ▶ Visit the NICHD's Scientific Vision Web site at <http://www.nichd.nih.gov/vision/> for more information about the Vision process.
- ▶ Visit the Scientific Visioning section on the Insider at <http://insider.nichd.nih.gov>, the online gathering place for all Institute staff to share their thoughts, ideas, and recommendations with colleagues and NICHD leadership to help develop and refine the scientific vision.