

HEALTH DISPARITIES RESEARCH & TRAINING FELLOWSHIP

SPONSOR: UK DEPARTMENT OF BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE

2026 REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

Purpose

The UK College of Medicine Department of Behavioral Science (BSC) recognizes the importance of improving health outcomes for all Kentuckians. Additionally, there is a severe national shortage of physician-leaders dedicated to addressing the health of Kentucky communities in need. In response, through the BSC Council on Community, Education, Research and Training (CONCERT), we are proud to offer the Health Disparities Research and Training Fellowship to qualified first-year medical students. The goal of this fellowship is to enhance students' understanding of health disparities and to better equip them to serve disproportionately impacted Kentuckians.

Over 18 months (from January of the student's first year of medical school through the end of the student's second year) each fellow will work with an identified faculty member in the Department of Behavioral Science to develop a clear, achievable project that addresses alleviating health disparities or enhancing the health and well-being of those disproportionately impacted by health disparities in the US. Clinical science, basic science, community engagement, health humanities, or educational intervention projects will be considered.

Award Dates

Application Submission: Accepting submissions from October 1, 2026 - November 2, 2026

Funding Decisions: Early December 2026

Fellowship Start Date: January 1, 2027

Fellowship End Date: June 30, 2028

Eligibility:

- 1) Current first-year medical students enrolled at the University of Kentucky in good academic standing are welcome to apply.
- 2) The 18-month fellowship will start January 1, 2027 (spring of the student's 1st year of medical school) and will end on June 30, 2028 (end of the student's 2nd year).
- 3) Fellowship awardees will be required to take one course on health disparities during the Spring of their first year (see details below).

Funding:

- Stipend award for personal use in the amount of \$5,000; the stipend will be dispersed across two installments (\$2,500 in January 2027, \$2,500 in June 2027).
- A research award of up to \$2,000; IRB or other regulatory approvals (if required for the project) must be obtained for the project funds to be released.

Research Project:

- The application requires a one-page description of a research project (in the form of a Specific Aims page, see application instructions below). The research project should focus on an aspect of alleviating health disparities or enhancing the health and well-being of those disproportionately impacted by health

disparities. Clinical science, basic science, community-engagement, health humanities, or educational intervention projects will be considered.

- Proposed projects must meet the following criteria:
 - Applicants are required to select a PI mentor who has an ongoing project in their area of interest.
 - Applicants should take the lead on reporting a specific outcome, either one that the applicant proposes and can be feasibly incorporated into the mentor's existing project, or a previously planned outcome that the mentor agrees the applicant can lead.
 - Applicants must clearly articulate and describe the feasibility of their role in the project and ability to complete the project during the 18-month fellowship period.

The applicant is not required to recruit participants, collect, or analyze all data independently. However, the project should reflect a balanced team effort, with the applicant contributing a reasonable and well-defined portion of the work.

Mentorship:

- Applicants are required to work with a research mentor from the UK Department of Behavioral Science (see current list: [Behavioral Science Faculty](#)).
- The mentor(s) will support the student in developing the application and carrying out the proposed research. See "Mentor Responsibilities" section below and share this information when discussing potential mentorship with the Behavioral Science faculty member.
- Optional: Students may collaborate with an additional co-mentor outside of the Department of Behavioral Science, if the proposed project requires additional expertise beyond that of the BSC primary mentor. Students must communicate with both mentors and ensure their willingness to serve as co-mentors prior to submitting their application. Letters of support will be required from both mentors and should describe the plan for sharing co-mentor responsibilities.

Applicants are advised to contact potential mentors early in the application process to discuss research ideas and confirm their willingness to serve as a mentor. If applicants experience difficulty identifying a mentor, please email Dr. Darlingtina Esiaka at dkesiaka@uky.edu for assistance.

Research Timeline:

- 1) **January – March 2027:** Development of detailed research proposal. After the applicant receives the notice of the research fellowship award, they will spend the first several months of their fellowship fully refining the details of the research project and develop a full, detailed research protocol (along with their Behavioral Science mentor).
- 2) **April 1, 2027:** Deadline for submission of full research proposal with a 3-month check-in survey. The final detailed research protocol is submitted to the Fellowship Committee for review and feedback.
- 3) **August 2027:** Deadline for research project initiation. The project should have received regulatory approval (if needed), and the majority of the data collection should be collected by the start of M2. The project and analyses should remain active through Spring 2027.
- 4) **September 2027:** Submission of a mid-project progress report form with questions about the status of their research activities and progress.
- 5) **March 2028:** Project completed by end of March or the start of dedicated study for STEP exam.
- 6) **January 2028:** Submission of 12-month check-in survey.
- 7) **April 2028:** Submission of 15-month check-in survey.
- 8) **May/June 2028:** Research presentation. The fellow will create a 15–20-minute presentation to describe the background, methods, and data obtained from their research project. This will be an open forum open to the campus community; friends and family of the applicant are welcome.

- 9) **Summer 2028:** Submission of exit survey with final progress update and program feedback.

Fellowship Responsibilities:

- **Fellowship awardees are required to enroll in the following elective course during the **Spring of their 1st year of medical school** – **please note that enrollment will be required shortly after fellowship awards are granted.**
 - **Spring 2027:** MD 825: *Race, Racism and Health Disparities among African Americans in the U.S*
- All abstracts, posters, presentations and publications that result from this fellowship **must** acknowledge the support of the Department of Behavioral Science Health Disparities Research & Training Fellowship.

Mentor Responsibilities:

The primary research mentor must be a Department of Behavioral Science faculty member. However, faculty members outside of the department may serve on the applicant's mentorship team (although these additional mentors are not required). Each mentor will assume the responsibility of overseeing the applicant's research and progress.

The primary mentor is expected to assist the applicant with the following activities:

- Development of the fellowship application and research plan.
- Project implementation, including overseeing data collection and completion of the project.
- Development of full project proposal (**due April 1, 2027**).
- Completion of quarterly progress surveys describing the fellow's progress.
- Preparation of a brief final presentation of the fellow's project (**May/June 2028**).
- Completion of a final evaluation of fellow's progress/exit survey (**Summer 2028**).

Application Process

Applications must be submitted online by **11:59pm EST on November 2, 2026** at the following link:

<https://medicine.uky.edu/departments/behavioralscience/health-disparities-research-training-fellowship>.

Letters of recommendation must be sent directly to BSCConcert@uky.edu by the letter's author by **11:59pm EST on November 2, 2026**.

Application Components

- 1) **Application Form:** Complete and sign the application form: [HDRT Fellowship Application](#)
- 2) **Personal Statement:** Provide a personal statement of no more than 600 words that describes:
 - Any previous service or leadership experience as it relates to alleviating health disparities or enhancing the health and well-being of those disproportionately impacted by health disparities.
 - Commitment to addressing health disparities.
 - Describe why the Behavioral Science faculty mentor was selected for this project.
 - How the HDRT Fellowship will benefit the applicant in their training as a future physician.
- 3) **Research Proposal:** Submit a 2-page research proposal that includes the following elements:
 - a. Specific aims page (1 page) (*examples and general guidance if needed:* [NIH SA Page](#))
 - b. Project timeline (approx. ½ page) using the research timeline above as a general guide
 - c. Itemized budget justification (approx. ½ page)
 - i. \$2,000 maximum budget for the duration of the project.
 - ii. Conference travel will only be approved for students who are authors or co-authors on abstracts.

- iii. An example budget can be found here:
 - d. Questions regarding allowable costs should be directed to: Alicia Colliver (ajduna0@uky.edu)
- 4) **Resume or CV:** Include educational history, previous/current research activities (if any), employment, and extracurricular activities, and awards/recognitions.
- 5) **Two letters of recommendation:**
- a. One letter from a **previous or current mentor or supervisor** who can speak to the applicant's involvement working with an interest in health disparities research.
 - b. One letter from the **applicant's Behavioral Science faculty mentor**. If an additional co-mentor outside the Department of Behavioral Science is included in the application, they must also submit a letter of recommendation per the instructions below. The letter of support should describe the plan for sharing co-mentor responsibilities if there are two mentors.
 - c. Letters should be submitted on official letterhead and include a signature.
 - d. **Letters of recommendation must be sent directly to BSCConcert@uky.edu by the letter's author.** Letters should have the applicant's name as part of the file name and in the subject line of the email.

Virtual Interview

After an initial review of applications, CONCERT will extend interview requests to selected applicants. It is anticipated that interviews will take place the week of November 9, 2026.

Review Considerations

The Department of Behavioral Science Council on Community, Education, Research and Training (CONCERT) will review all applications. The Council will prioritize candidates who express a commitment to working toward alleviating health disparities or enhancing the health and well-being of those disproportionately impacted by health disparities.

Applications will be evaluated on the following criteria:

- Applicant's potential to carry out a project that aims to address health disparities.
- Faculty mentor(s) ability to provide adequate mentorship for the proposed project.
- Project feasibility (timeline, scope of data collection, applicant's previous research experience as it pertains to feasibility).
- Strength of proposed research idea and significance for addressing health disparities.

For questions regarding the HDRT Fellowship, please contact Dr. Darlingtina Esiaka at dkesiaka@uky.edu.