

NEWS

Autism research funding rises but still falls short of goals

BY LAURA DATTARO

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U.S. federal funding for autism research increased by more than \$23 million from 2016 to 2018, according to the **latest government report**. But the increases lag behind the Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee's (IACC) goal of doubling the 2015 research budget by 2020.

The committee is the federal government's primary means of overseeing **autism research funding**. It reports to the Office of Autism Research Coordination (OARC), which generates funding summaries to guide IACC every two years. Traditionally, IACC meets twice each year to also gather expert commentary before making recommendations to the secretary of health and human services.

The committee **has not met** since July 2019 and has yet to announce new members, but OARC released its latest report in April.

Autism research funding has increased by 74 percent since IACC first began tracking it in 2008, the report shows. But some members of Congress are asking for **an additional \$150 million** in funding in 2022, to better align with IACC's recommendations.

The vast majority of money spent in 2017 and 2018, the report shows, supported projects in seven priority areas that IACC identified more than a decade ago: screening for and diagnosing autism; the condition's underlying biology; factors that contribute to autism; treatments and interventions; services for autistic people; support for autistic teenagers and adults, known as 'lifespan issues'; and collecting and distributing research data about autistic people.

"It is encouraging to note that the area with the smallest number of projects, research on lifespan issues, has also grown during this time," says **Susan Daniels**, OARC director and IACC's executive secretary.

The report also evaluated research dollars spent in two key areas: autism in women and girls, and, for the first time, racial, ethnic, geographic and socioeconomic disparities in autism.

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