

Cancer Research Training Award

MANUAL

National Cancer Institute

Cancer Research Training Award (CRTA)

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PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Cancer Research Training Award (CRTA)

A. Purpose/Legal Authority

This issuance describes the National Cancer Institute's Cancer Research Training Award (CRTA). The CRTA is an NCI-specific fellowship award program that establishes an "umbrella" appointment mechanism with uniform provisions and a streamlined application process for the diverse training fellowship programs supported throughout NCI's Divisions, Offices, and Centers.

The CRTA fellowship award program policies are in alignment with many of the NIH Intramural Research Training Award (IRTA) program policies, which are based on the following legislative authorities:

(1) Section 405 (b) (1) (D) of the Public Health Service Act, 42 USC 284 (b) (1) (D), as amended, which authorizes Directors of each national research institute to conduct and support research training for which fellowship support is not provided under section 487 of the Public Health Service Act and which is not residency training of physicians or other health professionals.

(2) As defined in the implementing regulations at 42 CFR § 63.3, "the purpose of an NIH research traineeship is to provide support for financial subsistence to an individual during a period in which the awardee is acquiring training in: (a) basic and/or clinical biomedical or behavioral research relating to human health, including extending healthy life and reducing the burdens of illness, or (b) medical library science or related fields pertaining to sciences related to health or the communication of health sciences information. Traineeships are intended to make available in the United States an increased number of persons having special competence in these research fields through developmental training and practical research experience in the facilities of NIH, with supplemental training at other qualified institutions (see 63.8(a))."

The CRTA program incorporates the specific research mission of the NCI and is authorized under an NCI-specific training authority:

Section 413 (b) (3) of the Public Health Service Act, 42 USC 285a-2 (b) (3), as amended pertaining to the National Cancer Institute, which states that the Director of NCI in carrying out the National Cancer Program shall "support appropriate programs of education and training (including continuing education and laboratory and clinical research training)".

Service is a by-product of the CRTA Program, unlike Research and Clinical Fellowships where service is a dominant part of the training objective. CRTA Fellows do not perform a service for the Public Health Service. Rather, the CRTA Fellows are accepted for training in scientific disciplines that will enhance public health efforts to prevent, diagnose, and/or treat cancer, a disease of major public health significance. CRTA Fellows receive stipends and are considered to be in training status; they do not incur a service payback obligation. CRTA Fellows are not considered employees of the Federal government.

NOTE: Trainees are prohibited from having any human subject/patient contact unless they are entirely under the direct supervision, at all times, by an appropriately qualified NIH employee (FTE). See Section D.7. Tort Claims. Trainees may not be assigned official supervisory responsibilities, or sign documents (e.g., requisitions) on behalf of the Government.

CRTA Fellows must be U.S. citizens or permanent residents. Non-citizens may be appointed through the NIH Visiting Fellow Program (VFP), which is administered by the NIH Division of International Services (DIS).

NOTE: This manual documents NCI CRTA program policies. NCI Visiting Fellows can find information on NIH VFP policies at <https://policymanual.nih.gov/2300-320-3>. Although the NCI Visiting Fellows and CRTA Fellows are participating in separate fellowships with distinct policies, NCI is responsible for processing all financial actions related to NCI Visiting Fellowship awards and uses the CRTA stipend categories to determine the stipend amounts for NCI Visiting Fellows (see [Appendix 1](#)).

The CRTA Program encourages prospective participants from groups who are underrepresented in biomedical research, such as women, persons with disabilities, and individuals of ethnic and racial groups to apply for participation in the CRTA Program. See the Notice of NIH's Interest in Diversity, NOT-OD-20-031, available at <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-20-031.html>.

B. Program Provisions

CRTA program candidates may apply directly to the NCI Lab/Branch/Office performing research in areas of interest; application/selection procedures are detailed on the Center for Cancer Training (CCT) website <http://www.cancer.gov/grants-training/training/at-nci/apply>. Fellowship awards are limited by the number of training assignments available within participating NCI Divisions or Centers. CRTA Fellowships are subject to the availability of resources, including personnel, space, funds, and mentors' time. NCI

mentors are responsible for developing an individualized training program, including specific training plans, reviewed, and updated annually, for each CRTA Fellow, and are responsible for providing advice, guidance, instruction, and evaluation of progress and performance to each Fellow under their mentorship.

1. Eligibility Requirements. CRTA candidates must submit acceptable proof of U.S. citizenship or resident alien status and must be at least 17 years of age or older on June 15 of the internship year (students under 18 will be required to obtain parental consent and a work permit). If applicable, as directed by the Occupational Medical Service (OMS), candidates must complete a medical evaluation verifying fitness for the training assignment. The CRTA program is designed to provide training for individuals who meet the degree eligibility criteria of the categories specified below:

Category 1 – Pre-Baccalaureate: For individuals who have not attained a Bachelor's degree. Individuals who (1) are 18 years of age or older on June 15 of the internship year and are enrolled at least half-time in high school, college (including community college) at the time of application **OR** (2) are high school graduates at the time of application and have been accepted into accredited undergraduate programs. Students in Category 1 must provide enrollment documentation from their affiliated high school or college that they are in good academic standing and enrolled at least half-time in academic work.

In addition, individuals who are in *high school at the time of application*, must (1) be high school seniors and (2) if they will be 18 on June 15 of the internship year, live, at the time of application, within 40 miles of the NIH campus on which they will intern.

NOTE: Individuals who are U.S. permanent residents must be attending or have been accepted into **institutions in the U.S.** to be eligible.

Upon certification of completion of a baccalaureate degree, another fellowship award in Category 2 "Bachelor's Degree" may be approved for further training.

Category 2 - Bachelor's Degree: For individuals who have been awarded a Bachelor's degree - a copy of the degree diploma or degree certification from the Dean or Registrar must be provided. At this post-baccalaureate level, individuals with superior academic achievement of a cumulative 3.5 grade point average or greater (out of 4.0 maximum) may be credited with a two level increase in initial stipend. Individuals will receive hands-on specialized training. This experience will provide practical training for some individuals to become more effective and proficient in a staff support career and/or to become familiar with the latest, state-of-the-art procedures and equipment for reentry into the job market. For others, it may be a training interlude prior to entering into a formal graduate or more advanced degree program. This category would apply also to students who are enrolled in graduate or professional school and have written permission from their school to delay entrance for up to 1 year.

Category 3 - Master's Degree: Candidates at this level must have completed a Master's degree – a copy of the degree diploma or degree certification from the Dean or Registrar must be provided. Students who have a Master's degree and are working toward a more advanced degree could be appointed under this category.

NOTE: Predoctoral students in categories 1, 2, and 3 must provide enrollment documentation from their affiliated schools, universities, or medical/graduate schools that they are in good academic standing and enrolled at least half time in academic work. U.S. permanent residents must be enrolled and in good standing in institutions in the U.S. Students who are enrolled in graduate or other doctoral or medical degree programs and who have written permission from their school to interrupt their current schooling and to return within one year to their degree granting program are also eligible. Graduate students enrolled in predoctoral programs and appointment durations that are 6 months or greater must register with the [NIH Graduate Partnerships Program \(GPP\)](#).

Category 4 - Doctoral Degree Candidate: Students enrolled in Ph.D., M.D., D.D.S., D.M.D, D.V.M, or equivalent degree programs (which involves dissertation research). Students must have completed course requirements, passed qualifiers, and be formally recognized by the university as a doctoral degree candidate. Official documentation of this status (e.g., letter from Department Chair indicating that the student has completed their requirements to be a doctoral degree candidate or certificate indicating the student passed their qualifying exams) is required from the university. The NCI research experience is undertaken to engage in a research project for the purpose of developing and writing a doctoral dissertation. Upon certification of completion of the doctoral degree requirements, a postdoctoral fellowship award may be approved.

Category 5 - Postdoctoral Degree: Individuals who possess a Ph.D., M.D., D.D.S., D.M.D., D.V.M. or equivalent doctoral degree in a biomedical, behavioral, or related science; or certification by a university as meeting all the requirements leading to such a doctorate.

For some, this may be their first postdoctoral training assignment. It may also offer more experienced postdoctoral scientists an opportunity to further their training in more advanced (and emerging) methods, to acquire new research capabilities, to make changes in the direction of their research, and/or to receive training in fundamental sciences and clinical disciplines for the purpose of enhancing the transfer of biotechnology to cancer clinical programs. The Federal Technology Transfer Act of 1986, as amended, requires Federal agencies to facilitate the transfer of government developed technology to the private commercial sector. To this end, opportunities may be available for individuals with a law degree (JD) to develop expertise in the development, implementation, and evaluation of current and emerging methods for technology transfer.

Postdoctoral trainees will have 5 or fewer years of relevant postdoctoral experience and up to 2 additional years of experience not oriented towards research (i.e., clinical training for physicians). Individuals with over 5 years, but no more than 8 years, of relevant

postdoctoral experience may be appointed if recommended by the respective Lab/Branch/Office Chief and approved by the Division/Center Director.

Category 6 - Specialty Competitive Allowances: The specialty categories are listed in Appendix 1, Category 6. The specialty allowance is determined by the candidate's degree specialty, not by the candidate's experience related to the training assignment. An annual allowance for each specialty may be applied to the base stipend category for qualified individuals, based on the highest degree attained and applicable to the same field as the training assignment.

2. NCI Specialized Cancer Training Programs. CRTA program policies are also applicable to CRTA Fellows who are appointed to NCI's Specialized Cancer Training Programs. Details of these specialized training programs can be found at the Center for Cancer Training (CCT) website:

<http://www.cancer.gov/researchandfunding/cancertraining/atnci>.

Historically, training assignments within the NCI Specialized Cancer Training Programs have been focused on basic or clinical biomedical research or in areas related to the communication of health sciences information. Over time though, the appropriateness of and need to establish training programs in related fields to facilitate research have grown. NCI may support developmental training fellowships in research management and administration. For instance, a fellowship in research management and support might include an assignment in an extramural research environment where training activities are critical to effective scientific review, evaluation, and management.

3. Training Schedule. Training is normally on a full-time basis. In addition to summer assignments, an award for full-time training may be made during the school year for predoctoral students in good academic standing enrolled in at least half time academic work.

On the rare occasion when a high school, undergraduate, or graduate student may be unable to devote to training full time because of academic course requirements, an acceptable prearranged part-time tour may be negotiated with the mentor and documented in writing. Intermittent schedules are not permitted. While an annual appointment may be made, the fellowship approval and activation period may be processed in no more than two funding increments a year for accounting purposes. For part-time periods, the stipend is prorated based on the amount paid to similarly qualified students as shown in Appendix 1, under the appropriate predoctoral category (1, 2 or 3).

For postdoctoral fellows, part-time schedules must be approved by the NCI Center/Division Director on a case-by-case basis. Intermittent schedules are not permitted. Part-time schedules cannot exceed a total of eight years. Note: Part-time schedules of less than 32 hours per week will affect eligibility for health insurance benefits.

4. Award Periods; Appointments. CRTA fellowship appointments are for a minimum of two months and may be authorized for up to a two-year period. Accounting procedures and appropriation law require that the fellowship award be made one year at a time. For the occasional student who requires a part-time schedule, no more than two approval and activation periods in a year may be processed (see Training Schedule paragraph 3, above).

5. Selection Policy. Individual principal investigators select their own postdoctoral CRTAs, postbaccalaureate CRTAs, academic interns at all educational levels, and summer interns (except high school summer interns). Applicants to these programs are encouraged to directly contact investigators with whom they would like to work.

High school summer interns are selected by committees in the Institute/Center, not by individual principal investigators. Therefore, applicants to the high school Summer Internship Program should not contact PIs directly.

The mechanism for selecting predoctoral CRTAs depends on whether they have applied to a GPP Institutional Partnership (selections are made by admissions committees), to a GPP Individual Partnership (selections are made by individual principal investigators), or to the Medical Research Scholars Program, administratively housed within the NIH Clinical Center.

Candidates may not be excluded from consideration or evaluation on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, age, national origin, political affiliation, or any other non-merit factor. Appropriate documentation should be routed through the designated NCI program administrative officials.

An individual who is a Relative (as defined in NIH Manual Issuance 2300-310-1) of an NCI employee is not prohibited from being appointed as a CRTA Fellow because of this relationship. However, any direct or indirect sponsorship between relatives is not allowed. No NCI employee may sponsor, either directly or indirectly, any CRTA for a Relative. Furthermore, the NCI employee may not advocate or participate in the review, evaluation, or selection of any CRTA fellowship application involving a Relative. Please note the nepotism policy at <https://policymanual.nih.gov/2300-310-1>. In no case may trainees receive a training assignment in a Lab/Branch/Office where a relative has authority for resource allocation decisions. Furthermore, the NIH Policy Statement on Personal Relationships in the Workplace, which goes beyond nepotism, must be strictly followed <https://hr.nih.gov/working-nih/civil/nih-policy-statement-personal-relationships-workplace>.

For minors under 18 years of age, if required by State or local government law, work permits must be obtained. A written agreement of a parent or guardian is also required. In addition, restrictions published by the Department of Labor (DOL) must be followed regarding assignments that may be hazardous or detrimental to the health and well-being of minors.

6. Duration of Training Categories

a. Pre-Baccalaureate Category. High school or college undergraduate students may participate in the CRTA program as long as they remain in good academic standing, and until they are awarded a Bachelor's degree.

b. Predoctoral Categories. The CRTA Fellowship is up to a two-year program for individuals with a Bachelor's (category 2) or Master's (category 3) degree. In rare circumstances, the Division/Center Director may approve an extension for a terminal third year. Written documentation must describe the ongoing need for training, rotational assignments, and the experience to be gained.

Graduate students may participate in the CRTA program for the lesser of two options: (1) as long as they remain in good academic standing, until they are awarded a degree OR (2) up to three years for Master's degree students when an extension has been approved; up to five years for students in a doctoral degree program.

c. Doctoral Degree Candidate Category. Students must have completed course requirements and passed qualifiers to be formally recognized as doctoral degree candidates. The maximum duration for a doctoral degree candidate will normally be three years or until the candidate receives a doctoral degree, whichever is shortest. Renewals beyond three years may be approved without an increase in stipend. The Division/Center Director may approve an extension.

d. Postdoctoral Category. For this category, the CRTA is up to a five-year program. A terminal sixth year as a CRTA Fellow will only be considered under extraordinary circumstances, e.g., previously documented career changes or circumstances beyond the control of the individual that would have affected the progression of the research project. Request and justification for a terminal sixth year extension must be initiated by the CRTA Fellow's mentor through the respective NCI Laboratory or Branch Chief and be approved by the NCI Center/Division Director.

NOTE: If there is any possibility that the CRTA Fellow may be converted to an FTE (Research Fellow) position in the NIH Intramural Research Program, they cannot be granted a terminal sixth year. This NIH policy is clarified in the Exceptional Extensions of IRTA and Visiting Fellowships to a Sixth Year, found at this site <https://oir.nih.gov/sourcebook/personnel/recruitment-processes-policies-checklists/exceptional-extensions-irta-visiting-fellowships-6th-year>. According to this policy, "Until further notice, exceptional extensions allowing a sixth year as a postdoctoral IRTA fellow can be granted by the Scientific Director (and not further delegated; for VF, G7 Peer Review Committee approval is required) under the following circumstances: The fellow is not being considered for a position at NIH and understands that the sixth IRTA/VF year is a terminal extension. For instances in which application for a tenure-track position or staff scientist position is being considered, a research fellow appointment is the appropriate mechanism. [Note added on 1/20/2010 - Once an IRTA/VF has been at the NIH for a sixth year, they may not remain in the Intramural

Research Program in any capacity (although an IRTA fellow can move to a job in an extramural office at the NIH) and may only return after a two-year period has elapsed.]”

e. NIH Non-Tenured Duration Policy for Postdoctoral Fellows. As noted in paragraph (d), above, the NIH duration policy on training and service fellowships states that postdoctoral trainees should generally not remain at the NIH for more than five years, unless additional years are justified and approved in writing by the respective Center/Division Director with copies provided to the fellow and the Office of Intramural Research (OIR).

Per the NIH 5-year/8-year duration rule found at <https://oir.nih.gov/sourcebook/personnel/recruitment-processes-policies-checklists/5-year-8-year-duration-rule>, an overall limitation for postdoctoral fellows exists of not more than eight years at the NIH, regardless of appointment mechanism, unless the scientist is approved for tenure track, tenure, staff scientist, staff clinician, or other permanent appointment. All postdoctoral training time spent in all mechanisms (e.g., temporary, term, Special Expert, Special Volunteer, Guest Researcher, and training and service fellowships) counts toward this eight-year limitation. Therefore, the total non-tenured service record at NIH (including non-FTE and FTE years of service) must be calculated prior to setting the length of the appointment or extension.

Any exceptional requests for consideration beyond this limitation must be recommended by the applicable NCI Center/Division Director and the NCI Director prior to preparing a formal request to the Office of Intramural Research.

f. Exceptions. When a complete change to a different career track requires additional training time, individual exceptions beyond the above duration limitations will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Written justifications must be recommended by respective Center/Division Directors for approval by the NCI Director.

Examples of this would include switching from an intramural research group assignment to developmental training in an extramural research environment or to research management, administration, science policy, and technology transfer activities.

C. Stipends

1. General. Set stipends for CRTA Fellows are paid from NCI funds in accordance with the stipend categories identified on [the NIH OITE website](#). Periodic reviews of trainee stipend levels are completed by the Office of Intramural Research in consultation with the NIH Board of Scientific Directors. Their recommendations for across-the-board cost of living adjustments are presented to the NCI Director, who has the authority to approve adjustments to the CRTA stipend levels.

2. Supplemental Funding. CRTA fellowship funds may be used to supplement funding provided to a CRTA Fellow from an outside sponsor, as long as the outside sponsor is not another U.S. Government agency. Supplemental Funding should be granted:

- ONLY to Trainees who have already been approved for or currently receive outside (non-extramural NIH) support;
- ONLY to Trainees NOT receiving support under the National Research Service Award (NRSA) Program;
- ONLY to Trainees that have NO employment relationship with the outside (non-extramural NIH) sponsor: other issues, e.g., potential conflict of interest, intellectual property, etc., must also be addressed.

Whether a CRTA Fellow may accept such outside fellowship support is determined on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of the CRTA Fellow's mentor and must be in the best interest of NCI. In such circumstances, the combined level of support from both sources may not exceed authorized stipend rates for similarly qualified fellows under a fully funded CRTA in order to meet NIH stipend parity. A supplemental CRTA solely to cover the cost of health insurance cannot be authorized. A CRTA Fellow receiving supplemental support must receive a partial stipend to qualify for health insurance coverage through NCI.

3. Advance Payment. At the time a CRTA Fellow's award is activated, an initial advance in an amount less than \$2000 may be requested by the mentor and authorized by the Lab/Branch/Office Chief. When authorized, an advance payment will reduce the annual stipend amount; the remaining stipend balance will be issued in arrears in 12 equal monthly payments. NOTE: If the CRTA Fellow leaves within 12 months of the activation of the award, the time served may not offset the balance of the advance. In this case, the CRTA Fellow must reimburse NIH for the amount owed. A personal check covering a stipend overpayment must be submitted to the Office of Financial Management (OFM) "Fellowship Payment Office" with a copy of the FPS-generated termination notice. Any unrecovered overpayment will be treated as a debt owed to the U.S. Government.

Summer CRTA Fellows may only receive an advance based on financial hardship due to relocation. The advance may not exceed an amount greater than 30% of the prorated annual stipend for the award period.

4. Stipend Payment Process. Stipends are paid in arrears on a 30-day monthly basis. CRTA Fellows must complete an Automated Clearing House (ACH) Vendor/Miscellaneous Payment Enrollment Form to designate payment to a financial institution. NCI Certification Officials will certify stipend payments in the Fellowship Payment System (FPS) between the 20th and 25th of each month. The OFM will authorize all certified stipend payments in the FPS and transmit a payment schedule to the U.S. Treasury Department. Monthly stipend payments, for those that have ACH, are direct-deposited, usually within the first 5 business days of each month.

5. Annual Pay Increases. Annual stipend increases may be granted to individual CRTA Fellows based on demonstrated progress in the training assignment. Permitted annual set increases are described in the stipend categories in [Appendix 1](#). This policy is consistent

with other training awards, including those from outside philanthropic organizations. Such increases may not be awarded more than once during each 52 calendar week period and should be processed in connection with the fellowship award renewal.

6. Exceptional Pay Increases. In addition to the annual stipend increase, a possible one time per award advancement to the next annual stipend level may be approved at the time of renewal for postdoctoral CRTA Fellows who have made exceptional and outstanding progress in their training assignments. A Center/Division's allocation is based on the on-board count at the end of the fiscal year. Up to 10% of a Center/Division's postdoctoral fellows may receive this exceptional pay action in the subsequent calendar year. Although there is sustained value in this exceptional increase for the duration of the fellowship award, another increase may be approved in a subsequent fiscal year with justification that shows highly meritorious accomplishments other than what may have been cited for any prior exceptional increase. Approval of a second increase resides with the Center/Division Director.

D. Benefits

1. Health Insurance. Like all NIH trainees, CRTA Fellows must be covered by adequate health insurance in order to receive training in NIH facilities. This requirement may be satisfied by a policy held either in the CRTA Fellow's name or in another's name with the CRTA Fellow identified as a family member. Verification of health insurance enrollment is required.

An approved plan of health insurance is available through the NIH Foundation for Advanced Education in the Sciences (FAES). CRTA Fellows must have an appointment of at least 60 days and be in training status for a minimum of 30 hours per week to be eligible for coverage through the FAES. NOTE: In cases where the duration of the fellowship is less than 60 days or the purchase of health insurance would result in an undue financial hardship for a student or summer intern, appointment length eligibility restrictions may be waived. This coverage may be approved at the discretion of the NCI.

Should CRTA Fellows elect FAES health insurance, they are strongly encouraged to enroll in the FAES health insurance on, or before, the day of their award start date. CRTA Fellows do have a 30-day grace period to submit enrollment paperwork to FAES. If enrollment is elected after the award start date, but within the 30-day grace period, FAES health insurance enrollment will be effective as of the start of the award. If a CRTA Fellow misses the grace period or waives the FAES Health insurance, the CRTA Fellow must wait until the FAES open enrollment or have a qualifying event to elect the FAES health insurance (proof of qualifying event required). The CRTA Fellow should meet with FAES to complete, sign, and submit all required health insurance forms, if possible. (CRTA Fellows may also email all completed paperwork and forms to Faesinsurance@mail.nih.gov; however, they must also notify their Administrative Office of submission.) CRTA Fellows must maintain an existing policy or purchase a personal policy until they have met with FAES and elected FAES health insurance. FAES health insurance information is located at <https://faes.org/content/health-insurance-services>.

Funds for individual or family FAES fee-for-service health insurance plans may be provided by the sponsoring NCI Center/Division in addition to the CRTA Fellow's regular stipend amount. For a non-FAES policy, NCI may pay or reimburse for a policy issued in the CRTA Fellow's name in an amount not to exceed that of the FAES fee-for-service health insurance, individual or family coverage, as appropriate. Alternatively, NCI may reimburse for any additional health insurance cost, if incurred, as a result of being covered under a spouse's plan and identified as a "family member" in an amount not to exceed the cost of the FAES fee-for-service health insurance. Sufficient documentation verifying health insurance coverage and documenting health insurance costs are required when using a non-FAES policy.

If a CRTA Fellow separates from NIH, health insurance will continue for 30 days after the award end date (if the extension is elected in FPS by the CRTA Fellow's Administrative Officer). No changes to health insurance coverage (e.g. individual to family) are permitted during this final 30 days of coverage.

CRTA Fellows must notify the NCI Administrative Officer (AO) and FAES of qualifying life events to change health insurance coverage, e.g., marriage, birth, divorce, loss of other health insurance coverage. A change in health insurance coverage due to a qualifying life event must be reported within 30 days of the event. The change in insurance coverage will be effective as of the date of the qualifying life event. If a change is not requested within 30 days of the qualifying life event, the CRTA Fellow will need to wait to make any changes to coverage until either the following open enrollment period for the FAES health insurance plan or until another qualifying life event occurs, whichever occurs first. Evidence of the qualifying life event must be presented to FAES.

For further information on FAES, select the "Health Insurance Services" option from their home page <https://faes.org/>.

2. Excused Absence

a. Paid Absence

Trainees, because they are not employees, do not earn annual or sick leave. However, they should be excused for Federal holidays and any other time the government is closed. Trainees should be given 20 days per year for illness, personal emergencies, and vacations when awards are for more than 90 days. The number of days should be prorated for Traineeships less than one year. These excused absences do not accrue year-to-year and reset every year on the date of renewal. Preceptors should also provide flexibility for travel for interviews, and these absences should not be counted towards the 20 days of leave. Preceptors may exercise discretion in granting additional short absences (less than a week per year) as they deem appropriate. More extended absences must be approved by the mentor with concurrence from the respective Lab/Branch/Office Chief.

Twelve weeks of excused absence will be granted for the birth, adoption, or foster care placement of a child or other family health care. In addition, NIH Institutes and Centers

(ICs) must excuse absences to accommodate a trainee's military obligations, i.e., active duty, active-duty training, and inactive duty training Not to Exceed (NTE) six weeks per year.

b. Unpaid Absence

A break in the award without stipend may be approved by the mentor with concurrence from the respective Lab/Branch/Office Chief. The effective date to temporarily stop payment must be entered into the FPS; the award must be reactivated in the FPS to resume payment. The term of the CRTA Fellow's appointment may be extended for unpaid absences of 4-12 months at the discretion of the applicable NCI Division/Center Director. A new appointment will be required for CRTA Fellows who return after an unpaid absence that exceeds 12 months.

FAES Elected Health Insurance: Should a trainee with FAES health insurance plan to be absent without stipend for less than 60 days, NIH requires the trainee to maintain continuous health insurance coverage. Specifically, trainees must personally complete a Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1985 (C.O.B.R.A.) application through FAES and begin to pay health insurance coverage premiums on the 1st day of the month following the start date of the unpaid absence and continue to pay for any month when trainee is not in a pay status on the first day of the month. For example, if the trainee is absent without stipend effective June 15th through August 15th, the trainee must pay health insurance premiums beginning July 1st (1st day of the month following the start date of unpaid absence) and pay the premium for the full month of July and August (any full month when trainee is not in a pay status on the first day of the month)

Should the trainee plan to be absent without stipend for more than 60 days, the trainee may choose to stop coverage and not pay the premium. Upon return to NIH, the trainee may then re-enroll as a new subscriber. Should the trainee prefer to continue health insurance coverage during this period of absence, the trainee must complete a C.O.B.R.A. application through FAES. Generally, C.O.B.R.A. coverage is limited to 18 months. Please contact an FAES insurance representative for current information on C.O.B.R.A. coverage.

Regardless of total time spent in unpaid absence, the respective Division/Center must provide to FAES written notification generated from the FPS to include start and end date of unpaid absence. In addition, upon the trainee's return, the Division/Center must provide a written notification generated from the FPS to FAES and OFM.

3. Flexible Work Options. Flexible work options, listed below, may be authorized for CRTA Fellows whose personal circumstances require an accommodating work arrangement.

a. Telework. A CRTA Fellow may be considered for some telework (working from home) at the discretion of the mentor. An agreement describing the expectations for the teleworking period (e.g., work productivity, number of hours dedicated to the project) must be signed by the CRTA Fellow and the mentor. This NCI telework training

agreement must be completed prior to participation in the telework program. Please refer to [Telework Policies for IRTA/CRTA and Visiting Fellows](#) in the Sourcebook for additional guidance.

b. Keep the Thread Program. The Keep the Thread Program is an NIH-wide program designed to accommodate trainees who need flexibility in their career development schedules. The program offers a variety of options, ranging from alternative work schedules to temporary part-time work arrangements. The goal of the Keep the Thread program is to encourage trainees to stay connected to the NIH community during times of intense personal or caregiving needs in order to facilitate eventual reentry into full-time research. Where appropriate, CRTA Fellows and their Principal Investigators (PIs) are encouraged to work together to design an accommodation and reentry plan that meets the needs of both the CRTA Fellow and the research group. The program is open to all postdoctoral CRTA Fellows, with the approval of their PI and the applicable NCI Division/Center Director. Details of the Keep the Thread program can be found in the NIH Sourcebook at <https://oir.nih.gov/sourcebook/personnel/recruitment-processes-policies-checklists/keep-thread-policy>.

4. Medical Treatment. All CRTA Fellows may use the Occupational Medical Service or Occupational Health Service for injuries sustained and emergency care on the training assignment. Workers' compensation and benefits under the Federal Employees Compensation Act, 5 U.S.C. 8101(1)(B) may be applicable in the event of a work-related injury.

5. Travel

a. Travel to NIH. CRTA Fellows appointed for a period of 12 months or more, and their dependents, may be authorized travel costs to relocate to NIH at the discretion of the sponsoring Lab/Branch/Office Chief. The total allowance for relocation expenses, including transportation, shipment of household goods, and temporary storage, may not exceed \$3,000. No allowance for return travel is authorized.

b. Travel to Scientific Meetings. Payment of travel to attend scientific meetings or to train at a remote site is at the discretion of the NCI and is subject to availability of funds. CRTA Fellows may accept payment only on an "In Kind" basis to cover travel and per diem expenses from an outside entity while attending an "official duty" type event for the purpose of teaching, speaking, or writing (such as presenting a paper at a scientific meeting), provided there is no conflict of interest in the source of the funds. No honorarium, or compensation for services rendered, may be accepted. Reimbursement must be from nonfederal funds. CRTA Fellows must request and receive advance approval, in writing, from the NCI Center/Division Director in order to accept outside travel reimbursement. The HHS Form 348 is not to be used since CRTA Fellows are not government employees. However, NCI administrative staff, on behalf of a CRTA Fellow, must complete an Acceptance Letter and a Certification Checklist indicating that the funding source is nonfederal. For additional information, see [NIH Policy Manual 1500, Chapter 08-03](#)). Also see guidance at <https://oir.nih.gov/sourcebook/ethical->

[conduct/government-ethics/guidelines-non-fes-trainees-nih-related-activities-outside-activities.](#)

When a separate travel allowance is available through an outside sponsor, at its discretion, the NCI may supplement that allowance only to the extent that outside funding is insufficient to pay authorized travel costs.

A personal check covering a travel advance overpayment must be submitted to the Cashier's Office attached to a copy of the travel voucher. Any unrecovered overpayment will be treated as a debt owed the U.S. Government.

c. Travel for Supplemental Training Away from NCI Approved by the NCI Director. When appropriate, travel for either long-term temporary duty assignments or relocation allowances, whichever is more cost efficient and beneficial to the government, may be allowed.

6. Training and Tuition

a. Generally. CRTA Fellows may receive training or tuition assistance for courses/workshops that are directly related to NCI's mission and the objectives of the fellowship. These costs must be authorized by the CRTA Fellow's sponsoring Lab/Branch/Office approving officials. NOTE: Training that extends beyond the expiration date of the CRTA Fellow's appointment will not be authorized.

b. Individual Development Plans/Mandatory Training. Individual Development Plans (IDPs) are required for all CRTA Fellows and should clearly communicate the goals and expectations for the training assignment. IDPs must be established at the start of the training and be updated each year at the renewal date. Each CRTA Fellow must also complete all NIH mandatory training. CRTA Fellows who will be working with animals, exposed to hazardous situations, or in contact with patients, must receive appropriate instruction. Training should include biosafety, handling of hazardous materials, patient privacy, human subject protections, and proper animal care and treatment. CRTA Fellows are prohibited from having any human subject/patient contact unless they are entirely under the direct supervision, at all times, by an appropriately qualified NIH employee (FTE). CRTA Fellows may not engage independently in any patient care activities. Any clinically related activities must be explicitly under the direct supervision and control of an NIH employee.

c. Supplemental Training. Supplemental training at a facility away from NCI, including a foreign institution, that is directly related to the purpose of the CRTA Fellowship and necessary to its successful completion may be approved by the NCI Director.

NOTE: NCI may assign CRTA Fellows to other NIH ICs, provided that such assignments are in furtherance of the training and, further, that CRTA Fellows are funded by NCI appropriations and remain under the preceptorship of an NCI employee.

7. Tort Claims. CRTAs will likely be covered under the Federal Tort Claims Act (28 U.S.C. 2671 et seq.) and under section 224 of the PHS Act (42 U.S.C. 233(a)), from personal liability for damages or injuries that arise from actions occurring within the scope of their Federal assignment so long as the CRTA is under the direct control and supervision of a Federal employee. However, the ultimate decision on issues of coverage is made on a case-by-case basis by HHS Office of General Counsel, Department of Justice (DOJ), and, ultimately, the courts, and depends on the circumstances (e.g., including the activities of the CRTA and the proximity of the supervision).

E. Deductions

1. Social Security/Medicare. Since CRTA Fellowships are considered awards for training and not wages for service or employment, neither Social Security nor Medicare taxes are deducted from stipends. While definitive determinations regarding Social Security obligations and coverage must be made by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and the courts, it is the opinion of the NIH Legal Advisor that trainees would not be considered self-employed for purposes of coverage under the Social Security Act and, therefore, cannot make Social Security or Medicare payments on their own behalf. CRTA Fellows are encouraged to consult their local IRS office and/or tax advisor.

2. Retirement Benefits. CRTA Fellows are not employees, and therefore not eligible for Federal retirement benefits.

3. Income Taxes. CRTA Fellowship stipends are subject to Federal, state, and local income taxes; however, NIH does not withhold taxes from trainee stipends. The Office of Financial Management (OFM) annually prepares and sends appropriate income information to the IRS and to trainee's home address of record. Trainees may be required to file quarterly estimated Federal and State income tax returns to avoid fees for underpayment of taxes. Since interpretation and implementation of the tax laws are the responsibility of the IRS and courts, trainees should consult the IRS website, their local IRS office, and/or tax advisor if they have questions about the applicability of the current tax code to the taxability of Traineeships, the proper steps to be taken regarding tax obligations, and concerns regarding their own situations.

F. Outside Work

Outside employment for CRTA Fellows must be approved in accordance with NIH Ethics Office policies <http://ethics.od.nih.gov/>. Specific policy requirements for trainee outside activities can be found in the ethics guidelines for non-FTE trainees <https://oir.nih.gov/sourcebook/ethical-conduct/government-ethics/guidelines-non-ftes-trainees-nih-related-activities-outside-activities>.

G. Publications

The publication and presentation of scientific research by CRTA Fellows are governed by the same policies as applied to other scientists, either employed by or in training at NIH,

as described in Manual Chapter 1184 “Preparation and Clearance of Scientific, Technical, and Public Information by NIH Employees or Produced for Distribution by NIH” <https://oma1.od.nih.gov/manualchapters/management/1184/>. Additional guidance on authorship and publications may be found in the “[Guidelines and Policies for the Conduct of Research](#)” and <https://oir.nih.gov/sourcebook/submitting-research-publications>.

H. Inventions

CRTA Fellows, like others working at NIH, are bound by all provisions of Executive Order 10096, as amended, 45 C.F.R. Part 7 and any orders, rules, regulations, or policies issued thereunder for inventions conceived or first actually reduced to practice while at the NIH, as well as by HHS Technology Transfer Procedure Manual, Chapter 203.1, “[NIH Procedures Related to Disposition of Rights in Inventions by Non-Employees Working at NIH, Receiving NIH Intramural Training Support or Working On-Site under Research Collaborations](#) (NIH-Access only). CRTA Fellows will disclose promptly, to the appropriate NIH technology transfer officials, all inventions which they conceive or first actually reduce to practice during their assignment and will sign and execute all papers necessary for conveying to the government the rights to which it is entitled by virtue of Executive Order 10096, as amended.

I. Termination of Award

1. Early Termination of Awards to Postdoctoral CRTA Fellows. NIH guidelines for the early termination of awards to postdoctoral fellows can be found at this site <https://oir.nih.gov/sourcebook/personnel/recruitment-processes-policies-checklists/guidelines-early-termination-awards-postdoctoral-fellows>. These guidelines, as applicable to postdoctoral CRTA Fellows, are partially detailed below:

A postdoctoral CRTA Fellow's assignment to a specific research group may be appropriately changed or terminated early, prior to the end of his/her formal award period, for several reasons:

- a. "Incompatibility" between the CRTA Fellow and the mentor;
- b. Documented unsatisfactory performance by the CRTA Fellow;
- c. Serious misbehavior on the part of the CRTA Fellow.

In situation (a) above, a transfer is generally appropriate and is the responsibility of the Laboratory/Branch Chief or, if necessary, the Center/Division Director, to negotiate. In appointing a CRTA Fellow, the Laboratory/Branch Chief generally assumes the responsibility for providing a suitable training experience for a specific time period. Therefore, the Laboratory/Branch Chief should find a more suitable situation for the CRTA Fellow and be ready to support him/her, even in the program of another Laboratory/Branch or Center/Division, should there be no

mutually satisfactory place internally. The Division/Center Training Director should be consulted as needed.

For situation (b) above, termination prior to the completion of the appointment period must be based on rigorous documentation of unsatisfactory performance. Furthermore, the CRTA Fellow should have been notified in writing that his/her performance is unsatisfactory and given an opportunity to improve. Such notification must be specific and must outline suggestions for achieving a satisfactory level of performance. The decision to terminate the appointment should be communicated to the CRTA Fellow at least 12 months prior to the termination date where feasible. The decision to terminate the appointment rests with the Director of the Center/Division in which the fellow is appointed but can be delegated to the CRTA Fellow's Laboratory/Branch Chief. In the latter instance, the CRTA Fellow may ask the Center/Division Director to reconsider the contemplated action. With careful selection procedures, early termination of appointments for unsatisfactory performance should rarely be necessary.

In situation (c) above, swift, no-nonsense disciplinary action or even termination may be appropriate, and standard NCI procedures should be applied.

2. Early Termination of Awards to Post-Baccalaureate and Predoctoral CRTA Fellows.

NIH guidelines for early termination of awards to postbaccalaureate can be found here <https://oir.nih.gov/sourcebook/personnel/policies-recruitment-processes/policy-reassignment-or-early-termination-awards-postbaccalaureate-fellows>

These guidelines, as applicable to postbaccalaureate fellows, are partially detailed below:

- a. "incompatibility" between the postbaccalaureate fellow and the preceptor or documented unsatisfactory performance by the postbaccalaureate fellow
- b. serious misbehavior on the part of the fellow

NIH guidelines for early termination of awards to predoctoral fellows can be found here <https://oir.nih.gov/sourcebook/personnel/policies-recruitment-processes/policy-reassignment-or-early-termination-awards-predoxal-fellows>

These guidelines, as applicable to predoctoral fellows, are partially detailed below:

- a. "incompatibility" between the predoctoral fellow and the preceptor
- b. documented unsatisfactory performance by the predoctoral fellow
- c. serious misbehavior on the part of the fellow

- d. failure to maintain enrollment at the home graduate program/doctoral degree granting institution

The Division/Center Training Director should be consulted as needed.

3. General Guidelines for Early Termination of Awards to CRTA Fellows.

CRTAs may be revoked in whole or in part by the Center/Division Director in collaboration with the Deputy Director for Management, acting upon specific requests by the Laboratory/Branch Chief, provided that the revocation may not include repayment of funds that CRTA Fellows have already received. Centers/Divisions should notify OFM immediately when an award is terminated for cause, to avoid the possibility of overpayment.

The FPS process must be used for terminations of all trainees. Termination of the traineeship may be made prior to specific expiration date upon request of the trainee, or for scientific or other forms of misconduct or failure to comply with terms of the traineeship or to carry out or satisfy the purpose for which it was made. All termination proposals for cause must be in writing and provide the trainee with an opportunity to make a reply before a decision is rendered. In the case of personal incompatibility or any unforeseen programmatic circumstances, and absent any conduct issues, the Division/Center should arrange for transfer of the trainee to another research group.

A decision not to renew an appointment does not constitute early termination in the context of the OIR guidelines. Nevertheless, every CRTA Fellow should typically be notified in writing at least 12 months in advance that they will not be reappointed. Decisions not to renew appointments do not require formal justification to the CRTA Fellow. Fiscal considerations should not be the basis for early termination within the NCI Centers/Divisions.

Trainees must reimburse Office of Financial Management (OFM), OM, OD, NIH, for all stipend overpayments prior to OFM clearance. When a Traineeship is terminated prior to its normal expiration date, the trainee is no longer entitled to a stipend and any stipend checks received or deposited to the trainee's account inappropriately after the termination date are inadvertent and do not belong to the trainee but are the property of the United States. Trainees should reimburse the U.S. Government for any overpayment that may occur. Knowingly cashing, depositing, or converting any such check for the Trainee's use could result in criminal penalties. In addition, any un-recovered overpayment will be treated as a debt owed to the U.S. Government. A personal check must be submitted to the OFM "Fellowship Payment Office" with a copy of the FPS-generated termination notice. In addition, if the Foundation for Advanced Education in the Sciences (FAES) (301-496-8063) is handling the trainee's health insurance, it must be provided a "Notification of Termination" form, obtained from the Division/Center Administrative Officer. The FPS-generated "Notification of Termination" form must be submitted to FAES, which will provide advice and answer questions on Consolidated Omnibus Budget

Reconciliation Act (C.O.B.R.A.) benefits. The form must be signed by an FAES representative before the end of the month in which the fellowship is terminated to avoid overpayment.

J. Privacy Act

Records must be maintained in accordance with Privacy Act System Notice: 09-25-0158, Administration: Records of Applicants and Awardees of the NCI CRTA Program, HHS/NIH/OD/OIR/OITE (Office of Intramural Training & Education) for 5 years.

K. Records Retention, Removal, and Disposal

All records (e-mail and non-e-mail) pertaining to this manual must be retained and disposed of under the authority of the NIH Manual Chapter 1743, "Keeping and Destroying Records," Appendix 1, NIH Records Control Schedule, Section 2300 Personnel, 320 Staff Fellowship Programs (all items that apply).

Records Removal: A departing trainee must request at least 45 days in advance to remove Federal records from NIH custody. No records may be removed unless approved by the trainee's supervisor, Center/Division Scientific Director, and if applicable, the NCI Technology Transfer Department. Once approved, only copies of records may be removed. A CRTA Fellow should contact their Administrative Officer for information about the approval process and submission of required forms; final approval of removal of records must be sent to the NIH Records Management Office. Types of records that may be requested to remove copies of include the requestor's own lab notebooks; instrument data from requestor's own experiments; requestor's own presentations containing unpublished data; manuscripts and/or posters in states of development, on which requestor is an author, containing unpublished data; draft and final reports, policies, or other administrative material on which requester is an author or contributor; and correspondence sent or received by the requestor.

NIH e-mail messages: NIH e-mail messages (messages, including attachments, that are created on the NIH computer systems or transmitted over the NIH networks) that are evidence of the activities of the agency or have informational value are considered Federal records. These records must be maintained in accordance with current NIH Records Management guidelines. CRTA Fellows should contact their NCI Records Officer for additional information.

All e-mail messages are considered Government property, and if requested for a legitimate Government purpose, must be provided to the requester. Employees' and CRTA Fellow supervisors/mentors, the NIH staff conducting official reviews or investigations, and the Office of the Inspector General may request access to or copies of the e-mail messages.

E-mail messages must also be provided to the Congressional Oversight Committees, if requested, and are subject to the Freedom of Information Act requests. Since most e-mail

systems have back-up files that are retained for significant periods of time, e-mail messages and attachments are likely to be retrievable from a back-up file after they have been deleted from an individual's computer. The back-up files are subject to the same requests as the original messages.

L. Equal Employment Opportunities

The CRTA program fully supports NCI's Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) initiative through: (1) A commitment to recruit prospective candidates from diverse backgrounds, and to promote outreach to underrepresented communities; (2) Workplace diversity – developing the potential of all CRTA Fellows in meeting mission goals by providing career development opportunities for all; (3) a commitment to creating and maintaining a work environment that is free of harassment and discrimination; and (4) Reasonable accommodation to individuals with disabilities, in accordance with Federal laws, regulations, and NIH policies.

M. Program Evaluation

The NCI Director shall, in consultation with the advisory council for NCI, the National Cancer Advisory Board, “support appropriate programs of education and training (including continuing education, and laboratory and clinical research training).” *See* 42 U.S.C. § 285a-2(b)(3). To this effect, the National Cancer Advisory Board will conduct a periodic review of the CRTA program. The review will: (1) Evaluate the inclusivity of the CRTA program for all individuals, including women, individuals from diverse racial and ethnic groups, LGBTQ persons, and disabled persons; (2) Assess the CRTA program’s relationship to other NIH traineeship programs; and (3) Determine whether it is functioning effectively and accomplishing the purpose for which it was designed. The results of these evaluations and any recommendations for changes to the CRTA program will be presented to the NCI Director for consideration.

N. Management Controls

The purpose of this manual issuance is to provide policies and procedures for the implementation of the CRTA program.

1. The Office responsible for management controls relative to this manual issuance is the Office of Management (OM), NCI. Through this issuance, the OM is accountable for the methods used to ensure that management controls are implemented and working.
2. Frequency of Review: Periodic review of the fellowship process will be completed to determine if NCI Centers/Divisions are in compliance with policy. Reviews will be conducted every 3 to 5 years.
3. Method of Review: The OM will initiate and lead reviews consisting of a random sampling of fellowship files/documentation using a checklist that will monitor the NCI Center/Division compliance with various important aspects of the policy.
4. Review reports are sent to the NCI Director.

O. Delegations of Authority* and Award Exceptions

Delegated Areas of Authority	NCI Dir	NCI Cntr/Div Dir	Lab/Br Chief
CRTA			X
1. Approve initial & renewals within provisions at set stipend amount			
2. Approve supplemental funding from outside fellowship - Supplemented up to CRTA set stipend considering other allowances		X	
3. Approve part time schedule for Category 5 awards		X	
4. Approve stipends in excess of set amount	X		
5. Approve initial award if CRTA Fellow has more than 5, but less than 8 years of relevant postdoctoral experience		X	
6. Supplemental training at outside institutions	X		
7. Approve terminal 3 rd year for non-students/Master's degree students in Category 2 and non-students in Category 3		X	
8. Approve renewal beyond 3 rd year for doctoral degree candidates in Category 4		X	
9. Approve terminal 6 th year for Category 5		X	
10. Approve transfer/reassignment between Centers/Divisions		X	
11. Revoke fellowship		X	
12. Exceptional pay adjustments, initial.		X	
13. Exceptional pay adjustments, subsequent.		X	
14. Accelerated pay adjustments (less than 52 weeks from previous)	X		
15. Approve other exceptions to provisions	X		

In applying established program policies and practices to individual cases, there may be occasions when Lab/Branch/Office officials believe that exceptions are warranted. Requests for exceptions outside the delegated authorities above must be fully justified in

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writing, and must include a concise summary of the nature of, and basis for, the exception. Requests must be addressed to the NCI Director, who has final approval authority, and be routed through the respective Lab/Branch/Office Chief, Center/Division Director, and the Deputy Director for Management.

*See details of NCI Delegations of Authority Database

<https://nciconnect.nci.nih.gov/OMPC/Lists/DOA/AllItems.aspx?FilterField1=Functional%5Fx0020%5FArea&FilterValue1=Non%2DFTEs&OverrideScope=RecursiveAll&ProcessQueryStringToCAML=1#>

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 – Sample Cancer Research Training Award (CRTA) Checklist
(Additional documents, e.g., route slips/memos, vary according to Center/Division/ARC requirements. See your ARC Management Team for other Center/Division-specific policies)

NCI Documents:

- _____ Fellowship Request Form (FPS-generated form)
- _____ Training Plan (eIDP)*
- _____ Award Notification Letter
- _____ CRTA Agreement

Application Documents:

- _____ Statement of Research Goals
- _____ Letters of Reference (2)
- _____ Curriculum Vitae and Bibliography
- _____ Official Copy of School Transcript
- _____ Original school verification letter (on letterhead) indicating that the fellow is in good academic standing (GPA included) and is enrolled at least half time (*applies to fellows in student status*)
- _____ Copy of Degree (if applicable)
- _____ Documentation of Permanent Resident Status (if applicable)

NIH Forms:

- _____ SF-3881, ACH Vendor/Miscellaneous Payment Enrollment Form
- _____ SF-181, Ethnicity and Race Identification Form
- _____ SF-256, Self-Identification of Disability

*NCI transitioned from a paper training plan to an electronic Individual Development Plan (eIDP) in December 2019. An automated email is sent two weeks after a new award is activated to initiate an eIDP. The AO can monitor the progress of the eIDP, which may take up to 10 weeks to finalize. Any questions should be directed to the Center/Division Training Office.



Cancer Research Training Award
MANUAL



**NATIONAL
CANCER
INSTITUTE**