



National Institutes of Health
Office of Research on Women's Health



Building Interdisciplinary Research Careers in Women's Health (BIRCWH) Program

Transforming Women's Health Research & Biomedical Career Pathways

The Building Interdisciplinary Research Careers in Women's Health (BIRCWH) program is ORWH's flagship K12 Institutional Career Development Program. Designed to strengthen the **national women's health research workforce**, BIRCWH operates on the three core pillars of **interdisciplinary research, mentorship, and career development** to train junior investigators to view women's health and sex differences research through multiple lenses. BIRCWH protects at least 75% of a junior investigator's time to bridge the gap toward independent research careers and connects junior faculty with experienced senior mentors across clinical, basic, and public health sectors to ensure maximum scientific rigor in women's health.

1 Significant and Sustained Congressional Support

The BIRCWH program was established in 1999 through a special Congressional appropriation, and the program has enjoyed sustained congressional support since then.

2 High Grant Application and Funding Success Rates

Historically, BIRCWH scholars successfully transition from program support to independent funding mechanisms, demonstrating **highly competitive conversion rates**. Many scholars become leaders in the field.

3 NIH-wide Investment

Eleven NIH ICO partners co-fund the BIRCWH program, with the National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases (NIAMS) and National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) providing grants administration. A total of **915 BIRCWH Scholars** have been supported since the start of the program.

4 National BIRCWH Site and Cohort Expansion

Driven by rising demand, the program executed an unprecedented 2026 expansion, launching 6 new training sites and onboarding 21 additional scholars to existing BIRCWH sites. There are currently 25 active BIRCWH sites. Over the life of the program, BIRCWH has partnered with **48 institutions across 28 states**.

5 NIH-VA BIRCWH Scholar Program

Launched in June 2025, the first cohort of Scholars from this cross-agency partnership onboarded in April 2026, with the next application cycle opening in January 2027.