National Institutes of Health

- An agency of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), the National Institutes of Health (NIH) is the federal government’s lead medical and behavioral research agency and one of the world’s foremost medical research institutions. NIH’s mission is “science in pursuit of fundamental knowledge about the nature and behavior of living systems and the application of that knowledge to extend healthy life and reduce the burdens of illness and disability.”

- NIH supports biomedical and behavioral research nationally and internationally, conducts research, trains researchers and promotes the collection and sharing of medical knowledge. The NIH is the major source of funding for demographic research within the federal government.

- On January 15, 2007, the President signed into law the National Institutes of Health Reform Act of 2006. Among other provisions, the Act authorizes funding for the NIH, recommending increasing the funding level by 7 percent in Fiscal Year 2007 and, 8.2 percent in Fiscal Year 2008.

- The Act creates a new, comprehensive electronic reporting system that will catalogue all NIH research activities and a new biennial report to Congress on NIH research activities, advances, and future plans - including population research activities and advances. The Act establishes a formal strategic planning process for the entire NIH research portfolio and a “common fund” to provide a permanent funding mechanism for trans-NIH research projects.

- In addition, the Act establishes a new advisory council, the “Council of Councils,” and the Scientific Management Review Board and limits the overall size of the NIH to 27 institutes and centers.

- Furthermore, the reform authorizes the NIH director to award grants for demonstration projects for biomedical research bridging the biological, behavioral, and social sciences with the physical, chemical, mathematical, and computational sciences and also authorizes the director to establish demonstration programs that award grants, contracts, or engage in other transactions, for high-impact, cutting edge research.
• Within NIH, two institutes of key importance to demographic research are the National Institute of Aging (NIA) and the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD). Please see fact sheets.

• The House and Senate Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations Subcommittees fund the NIH. In Fiscal Year 2008, the full House Appropriations Committee recommended NIH receive $29 billion, a $750 million increase from the enacted FY 2007 budget and $1 billion above the administration’s request.

• PAA and APC participate in a number of coalitions concerned about funding for the NIH and behavioral and social science research, including the Consortium of Social Science Associations - http://www.cossa.org/index.shtml, Ad Hoc Group for Medical Research - http://www.aamc.org/research/adhocgp/start.htm, and Coalition for Health Funding - http://www.aamc.org/advocacy/healthfunding/.

• For additional information about the NIH, go to http://www.nih.gov/.

Updated August 2007