It’s heartbreaking when you hear from a parent that their child was just diagnosed with autism. You want to wrap your arms around them and say, I’m so sorry. Our hope is that one day, with the help of the BEARS program, we can say, There’s a cure for that.

- Chuck & Sarah Gardner
MIND Institute, Founding Family
Our VISION

The MIND Institute Brain Endowment for Autism Research Sciences (BEARS) is dedicated to advancing research around the world by providing scientists the necessary brain tissue to find the causes of, develop treatments for, and ultimately cures for autism and other neurodevelopmental disorders. In addition to our own diverse, discovery-driven, translational research programs, our objective is to foster worldwide collaborations with scientists across multiple disciplines to share the extraordinarily valuable resource of human brain tissue. Our mission is to continually translate knowledge acquired through basic research on the genetics, biology, and neuropathology of neurodevelopmental disorders into novel approaches for today’s treatments and tomorrow’s cures.

The RESEARCH

Brain research progress has been severely hampered by a lack of available brain tissue for scientists to study. Many medical researchers have devoted their careers to investigating brain development in children and adults with a neurodevelopmental disorder. The skills of these talented scientists are world-renowned, their dedication and compassion inspiring, but their efforts are slowed by a lack of available brain tissue. Although one in every 110 children is affected with an autism spectrum disorder, fewer than 100 cases have been studied over the past 30 years of autism brain research. To make a significant impact, scientists, national advocacy organizations, and the community need to work together to transform current thinking on brain donations for research. It is only through collaboration that we will dramatically advance research on neurodevelopmental disorders.

Your GIFT

The gift of human tissue is a rare and valuable resource on which medical researchers depend to understand neurodevelopmental disorders at the cellular and molecular level. With these gifts, scientists will be able to develop biological treatments and ultimately find a cure. Researchers will have the ability to study the complexity of the brain using a wide range of approaches from cellular development to immunology to genetics.

We ask that you consider registering yourself and your family to become a brain donor in the event of death. Brain donations from individuals with autism, other neurodevelopmental disorders, as well as those unaffected by a neurodevelopmental disorder are equally important and necessary for progress to be made. The passing of a loved one is a very difficult time for families. Consequently, it is important that you inform family members of your decision to make the precious gift of tissue donation upon your passing.

It is only by examining human tissue from individuals with a neurodevelopmental disorder, compared to unaffected individuals, that researchers can begin to find the causes, treatments, and cures for these life-changing disorders.

Ways to HELP

Inform others about the vital need for brain tissue for neurodevelopmental research.

Register as a donor for yourself and your family at www.MINDBEARS.ucdavis.edu.

Encourage others, with or without a disorder, to register as a brain donor.

Volunteer for outreach at the MIND Institute and community events.

Support this program with a financial contribution.

“We miss Grayson very much, although being able to allow him to give back to autism research has been very comforting to us. Your efforts give us hope that someday we will all be closer to finding that needle in the haystack, to best help others. How amazing your work is.”

– Valerie Hund (Mother of donor)