

Dated: May 6, 2003.

Robert H. Pasternack,

Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services.

[FR Doc. 03-11624 Filed 5-8-03; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

RIN 1820 ZA25

National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research

AGENCY: Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Department of Education.

ACTION: Notice of proposed priority.

SUMMARY: The Assistant Secretary proposes a priority for Research Infrastructure Capacity Building under the Disability and Rehabilitation Research Projects (DRRP) Program under the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR). The Assistant Secretary may use this priority for competitions in fiscal year (FY) 2003 and later years. We take this action to focus research attention on an identified national need. We intend this priority to improve rehabilitation services and outcomes for individuals with disabilities.

DATES: We must receive your comments on or before June 9, 2003.

ADDRESSES: Address all comments about this proposed priority to Donna Nangle, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, SW., room 3412, Switzer Building, Washington, DC 20202-2645. If you prefer to send your comments through the Internet, use the following address: donna.nangle@ed.gov.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Donna Nangle. Telephone: (202) 205-5880.

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Individuals with disabilities may obtain this document in an alternative format (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, or computer diskette) on request to the contact person listed under **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Invitation To Comment

We invite you to submit comments regarding this proposed priority.

We invite you to assist us in complying with the specific requirements of Executive Order 12866 and its overall requirement of reducing

regulatory burden that might result from this proposed priority. Please let us know of any further opportunities we should take to reduce potential costs or increase potential benefits while preserving the effective and efficient administration of the program.

During and after the comment period, you may inspect all public comments about this priority in Room 3412, Switzer Building, 330 C Street SW., Washington, DC, between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 4 p.m., Eastern time, Monday through Friday of each week except Federal holidays.

Assistance to Individuals With Disabilities in Reviewing the Rulemaking Record

On request, we will supply an appropriate aid, such as a reader or print magnifier, to an individual with a disability who needs assistance to review the comments or other documents in the public rulemaking record for this proposed priority. If you want to schedule an appointment for this type of aid, please contact the person listed under **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**.

We will announce the final priority in a notice in the **Federal Register**. We will determine the final priority after considering responses to this notice and other information available to the Department. This notice does not preclude us from proposing or funding additional priorities, subject to meeting applicable rulemaking requirements.

Note: This notice does not solicit applications. In any year in which we choose to use this proposed priority, we invite applications through a notice published in the **Federal Register**. When inviting applications we designate each priority as absolute, competitive preference, or invitational. The effect of each type of priority follows:

Absolute priority: Under an absolute priority, we consider only applications that meet the priority (34 CFR 75.105(c)(3)).

Competitive preference priority: Under a competitive preference priority, we give competitive preference to an application by either (1) awarding additional points, depending on how well or the extent to which the application meets the priority (34 CFR 75.105(c)(2)(i)); or (2) selecting an application that meets the competitive priority over an application of comparable merit that does not meet the competitive priority (34 CFR 75.105(c)(2)(ii)).

Invitational priority: Under an invitational priority, we are particularly interested in applications that meet the invitational priority. However, we do not give an application that meets the priority a competitive or absolute preference over other applications (34 CFR 75.105(c)(1)).

Note: NIDRR supports the goals of President Bush's New Freedom Initiative

(NFI). The NFI can be accessed on the Internet at the following site: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/freedominitiative/freedominitiative.html>.

The proposed priority is in concert with NIDRR's Long-Range Plan (the Plan). The Plan is comprehensive and integrates many issues relating to disability and rehabilitation research topics. While applicants will find many sections throughout the Plan that support potential research to be conducted under this proposed priority, a specific reference is included for the topic presented in this notice. The Plan can be accessed on the Internet at the following site: <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/NIDRR/Products>.

Through the implementation of the Plan, NIDRR seeks to: (1) Improve the quality and utility of disability and rehabilitation research; (2) foster an exchange of expertise, information, and training to facilitate the advancement of knowledge and understanding of the unique needs of traditionally underserved populations; (3) determine best strategies and programs to improve rehabilitation outcomes for underserved populations; (4) identify research gaps; (5) identify mechanisms of integrating research and practice; and (6) disseminate findings.

Disability and Rehabilitation Research Projects (DRRP) Program

The purpose of the DRRP Program is to plan and conduct research, demonstration projects, training, and related activities that help to maximize the full inclusion and integration of individuals with disabilities into society and to improve the effectiveness of services authorized under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (the Act). An applicant for assistance under this program must demonstrate in its application how it will address, in whole or in part, the needs of individuals with disabilities from minority backgrounds (34 CFR 350.40(a)). The approaches an applicant may take to meet this requirement may include one or more of the following (34 CFR 350.40(b)):

(1) Proposing project objectives addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities from minority backgrounds.

(2) Demonstrating that the project will address a problem that is of particular significance to individuals with disabilities from minority backgrounds.

(3) Demonstrating that individuals from minority backgrounds will be included in study samples in sufficient numbers to generate information pertinent to individuals with disabilities from minority backgrounds.

(4) Drawing study samples and program participant rosters from populations or areas that include individuals from minority backgrounds.

(5) Providing outreach to individuals with disabilities from minority backgrounds to ensure that they are aware of rehabilitation services, clinical care, or training offered by the project.

(6) Disseminating materials to or otherwise increasing the access to disability information among minority populations.

Priority

Background

This priority supports one DRRP on Research Infrastructure Capacity Building. This DRRP will improve the rehabilitation research infrastructure and rehabilitation services and outcomes for individuals with disabilities from minority populations. Minority population refers to specific race and ethnicity categories. The following race and ethnic categories are applicable for this priority: (1) American Indian or Alaska Native, (2) Asian, (3) Black or African American, (4) Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and (5) Hispanic or Latino. Definitions and further information about race and ethnic categories is available in the Office of Management and Budget Directive 15 at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/OMB/fedreg/ombdir15.html>.

Minority populations are among the fastest growing racial and ethnic groups in the United States. The U.S. Census Bureau predicts that the American Indian, Asian and Pacific Islander, Black, and Hispanic population will increase to 40 percent of the U.S. population by 2010 and 50 percent by 2050. Additionally, more than 32 million individuals in the U.S. speak a language other than English (latest figures available from the U.S. Census Bureau). Currently, about 10.4 percent of the U.S. population is foreign-born; by the year 2050, this figure is likely to rise to approximately 13.3 percent (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000).

Historically, disability disproportionately affects minority racial and ethnic populations. The changing demographic profile of the U.S. will potentially increase the demand for a disability and rehabilitation community that is better prepared to address the needs of a more ethnically, racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse population.

Language barriers and lack of understanding about cultural values and beliefs are challenges that may impact access to services, rehabilitation

outcomes, and research activities. Additionally, traditional theories and methodologies may ignore the unique characteristics and needs of minority populations and be ineffective for conducting research activities, disseminating research findings, and fostering the participation of minority racial and ethnic populations in research activities. Research activities are often challenged by methodological issues, particularly questions about the use of specific research approaches within certain cultural contexts.

NIDRR is interested in funding activities focused on high quality research that will assist with further development of the research infrastructure, particularly activities that expand research approaches for scientific inquiry of relevant variables to improve understanding of the needs of minority populations, including issues of race, ethnicity, and cultural context; improve our understanding about rehabilitation outcomes, and the disparate rate of disability in minority racial and ethnic populations; and assist with development of innovative methods for establishing collaborative research partnerships.

Proposed Priority—Research Infrastructure Capacity Building

The Assistant Secretary proposes to fund one DRRP that will focus on a research, development, and dissemination project on Research Infrastructure Capacity Building. The reference for this topic can be found in the Plan, Chapter 9, Capacity Building: Priorities in Capacity Building. In carrying out this purpose the DRRP must:

(1) Develop and evaluate an innovative method(s) for establishing long-term collaborative research partnerships, with an emphasis on relationships between minority entities, Indian tribes, and nonminority entities;

(2) Research, develop, and evaluate strategies to assess the efficacy of existing research theories, methodologies, and measures for studying and describing underrepresented individuals with disabilities from minority racial and ethnic populations and their needs;

(3) Research, identify and modify or develop, and evaluate scientifically valid measurement strategies and methodologies for research involving the study of underrepresented minority racial and ethnic populations; determine their efficacy; and examine the implications of introducing newly developed approaches designed specifically for the study of this population;

(4) Develop and evaluate research principles or standards for culturally appropriate and linguistically competent disability and rehabilitation research, and disseminate guidelines; and

(5) Develop, implement, and evaluate approaches for disseminating research findings, information about best practices for research involving underrepresented minority race and ethnic populations, and information about research collaboration.

In carrying out the purposes of the priority, the DRRP must:

- In the first three months of the grant, develop and implement a research partnership plan ensuring that all activities are predominantly focused on research infrastructure capacity building and provide for mutual benefit for each member of the partnership, including persons with disabilities or their representatives;

- In the first year of the grant, implement a plan to disseminate research results;

- In the third year of the grant, conduct a state-of-the-science conference focused on the funded area of research and related topics;

- In the fourth year of the grant, publish and disseminate a comprehensive report on the outcomes and proceedings of the conference;

- Demonstrate how the research project can transfer research findings to practical applications in planning, policy-making, program administration, and delivery of services to individuals with disabilities; and

- Conduct ongoing program evaluation and produce a closing report describing research outcomes, as they relate to the research goals and objectives, and future directions for research infrastructure development and capacity building.

Executive Order 12866

This notice of proposed priority has been reviewed in accordance with Executive Order 12866. Under the terms of the order, we have assessed the potential costs and benefits of this regulatory action.

The potential costs associated with the notice of proposed priority are those resulting from statutory requirements and those we have determined as necessary for administering this program effectively and efficiently.

In assessing the potential costs and benefits—both quantitative and qualitative—of this notice of proposed priority, we have determined that the benefits of the proposed priority justify the costs.

Summary of potential costs and benefits: The potential cost associated with this proposed priority is minimal while the benefits are significant. Grantees may anticipate costs associated with completing the application process in terms of staff time, copying, and mailing or delivery. The use of e-Application technology reduces mailing and copying costs significantly.

The benefits of the research infrastructure capacity building projects have been well established over the years in that similar projects have been completed. This proposed priority will generate new knowledge through a dissemination, utilization, training, and technical assistance project.

The benefit of this proposed priority and proposed applications and project requirements will be the establishment of a new DRRP projects that generates, disseminates, and promotes the use of new information that will improve the options for disable individuals to perform regular activities in the community.

Applicable Program Regulations: 34 CFR part 350.

Electronic Access to This Document

You may view this document, as well as all other Department of Education documents published in the **Federal Register**, in text or Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF) on the Internet at the following site: <http://www.ed.gov/legislation/FedRegister>.

To use PDF you must have Adobe Acrobat Reader, which is available free at this site. If you have questions about using PDF, call the U.S. Government Printing Office (GPO), toll free, at 1-888-293-6498; or in the Washington, DC, area at (202) 512-1530.

Note: The official version of this document is published in the **Federal Register**. Free Internet access to the official edition of the **Federal Register** and the Code of Federal Regulations is available on GPO Access at: <http://www.access.gpo.gov/nara/index.html>.

(Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number 84.133A, Disability Rehabilitation Research Project.)

Program Authority: 29 U.S.C. 762(g) and 764(a).

Dated: May 6, 2003.

Robert H. Pasternack,

Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services.

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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

RIN 1820-ZA23

National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research

AGENCY: Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Department of Education.

ACTION: Notice of proposed priorities.

SUMMARY: The Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services proposes priorities for up to seven awards under the Rehabilitation Research and Training Centers (RRTC) Program under the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR). The Assistant Secretary may use these priorities for competition in fiscal year (FY) 2003 and later years. We take this action to focus research attention on areas of national need. We intend these priorities to improve the rehabilitation services and outcomes for individuals with disabilities.

DATES: We must receive your comments on or before June 9, 2003.

ADDRESSES: Address all comments about these proposed priorities to Donna Nangle, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, SW., room 3412, Switzer Building, Washington, DC 20202-2645. If you prefer to send your comments through the Internet, use the following address: donna.nangle@ed.gov.

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SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

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We invite you to assist us in complying with the specific requirements of Executive Order 12866 and its overall requirement of reducing regulatory burden that might result from these proposed priorities. Please let us know of any further opportunities we should take to reduce potential costs or increase potential benefits while preserving the effective and efficient administration of the program.

During and after the comment period, you may inspect all public comments about these priorities in Room 3412, Switzer Building, 330 C Street SW., Washington, DC, between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 4 p.m., Eastern time, Monday through Friday of each week except Federal holidays.

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We will announce the final priorities in a notice in the **Federal Register**. We will determine the final priorities after considering responses to this notice and other information available to the Department. This notice does not preclude us from proposing or funding additional priorities, subject to meeting applicable rulemaking requirements.

Note: This notice does *not* solicit applications. In any year in which we choose to use these proposed priorities, we invite applications through a notice published in the **Federal Register**. When inviting applications we designate each priority as absolute, competitive preference, or invitational. The effect of each type of priority follows:

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Invitational priority: Under an invitational priority, we are particularly interested in applications that meet the invitational priority. However, we do not give an application that meets the priority a competitive or absolute preference over other applications (34 CFR 75.105(c)(1)).

Note: NIDRR supports the goals of President Bush's New Freedom Initiative (NFI). The NFI can be accessed on the Internet at the following site: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/freedominitiative/freedominitiative.html>.

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