

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION****Training Personnel for the Education of Individuals With Disabilities—Grants for Personnel Training****AGENCY:** Department of Education.**ACTION:** Notice of proposed priority.

**SUMMARY:** The Secretary proposes a priority for the Training Personnel for the Education of Individuals with Disabilities—Grants for Personnel Training program administered by the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. The Secretary may use this priority in Fiscal Year 1996 and subsequent years. The Secretary takes this action to focus Federal assistance on identified needs to improve outcomes for children with disabilities. This proposed priority is intended to ensure wide and effective use of program funds.

**DATES:** Comments must be received on or before April 25, 1996.

**ADDRESSES:** All comments concerning the proposed priority should be addressed to: Linda Glidewell, U.S. Department of Education, 600 Independence Avenue SW., Room 3524, Switzer Building, Washington, D.C. 20202-2641.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Scott Brown, U.S. Department of Education, 600 Independence Avenue SW., Room 3522, Switzer Building, Washington, D.C. 20202-2641.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) directs the Secretary to develop and implement a plan for providing outreach services to minority entities and underrepresented populations to assist them in participating more fully in the discretionary programs under the Act (section 610(j)(2)(C)).

This proposed priority supports the National Education Goals by improving understanding of how to enable children and youth with disabilities to reach higher levels of academic achievement.

The Secretary will announce the final priority in a notice in the Federal Register. The final priority will be determined by responses to this notice, available funds, and other considerations of the Department. Funding of particular projects depends on the availability of funds, the content of the final priority, and the quality of the applications received. Further, the priority could be affected by enactment of legislation reauthorizing this

program. The publication of this proposed priority does not preclude the Secretary from proposing additional priorities, nor does it limit the Secretary to funding only this priority, subject to meeting applicable rulemaking requirements.

Note: This notice of proposed priority does not solicit applications. A notice inviting applications under this competition will be published in the Federal Register concurrent with or following publication of the notice of final priority.

**Priority**

Under 34 CFR 75.105(c)(3), the Secretary proposes to give an absolute preference to applications that meet the following priority. The Secretary proposes to fund under this competition only applications that meet this absolute priority.

***Proposed Absolute Priority—Outreach Services to Minority Entities to Expand Research Capacity*****Background**

The Congress has found that the Federal Government must be responsive to the growing needs of an increasingly diverse society and that a more equitable distribution of resources is essential for the Federal Government to meet its responsibility to provide an equal educational opportunity for all individuals. The Congress has concluded that the opportunity for full participation in awards for grants, cooperative agreements and contracts by Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), other institutions of higher education whose minority enrollment is at least 25% (OMIs) and other eligible institutions as defined under section 312 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (OEIs) is essential if we are to obtain greater success in the education of children from diverse backgrounds in special education.

This priority focuses on assisting HBCUs, OMIs and OEIs to prepare scholars for careers in research on special education and related services. This preparation shall consist of engaging both faculty and students at HBCUs, OMIs and OEIs in special education research activities. The activities focus on an area of critical emerging need which has material application in today's changing environment and will likely be the subject of future research efforts—the *special education of children in urban and high poverty schools with predominantly minority enrollments*. By building a cadre of experienced researchers on this important topic, the chances for full participation in awards for grants, cooperative agreements and

contracts by HBCUs, OMIs and OEIs will be increased.

The association between socioeconomic status and enrollment in special education has been well documented. Available data from the National Longitudinal Transition Study (NLTS) show that 68% of students in special education live in a household where the income is less than \$25,000 per year versus 39% of the general population of youth.

The problem of this association is heightened in urban school districts and, to a lesser extent, rural districts. NLTS data reveal that only 34% of students in special education live in suburban school districts compared to 48% of all youth. Data from the Office for Civil Rights indicate that 30% of all inner-city students live in poverty compared to 18% of students in non-inner city areas. Moreover, findings from the National Longitudinal Transition Study indicate that 47% of urban youth with disabilities live in households with an annual income of less than \$12,000 (in 1986 dollars) compared to 34% of rural and 19% of suburban youth with disabilities (Valdes et al., 1990).

Urban school districts face a variety of challenges in meeting the educational needs of their students. Their schools often have high per student costs and limited financial resources. Their students are disproportionately poor and the population of individuals with limited English proficiency is among the fastest growing populations with special needs in some of these districts. This disproportionate representation of poor children in special education is also likely to be uniquely influenced by culturally diverse and urban settings, posing both opportunities and problems in the provision of special education services.

**Priority**

The Assistant Secretary establishes an absolute priority for a project to design and conduct a program of research by individuals who show promise of contributing to the program improvement activities authorized under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Each research activity of the program must implement the Congress' direction in section 610(j)(2) to support outreach activities to HBCUs, OMIs and OEIs to increase their participation in competition for research, demonstration and outreach grants, cooperative agreements and contracts funded under the IDEA. Activities shall include:

(1) Conducting research activities at HBCUs, OMIs and OEIs as explained

below that link scholars at HBCUs, OMIs and OEIs with researchers at institutions with an established research capacity in a mentoring relationship to develop both individual and institutional research capacity at those HBCUs, OMIs and OEIs with a demonstrated need for capacity development; and

(2) Providing linkages between HBCUs, OMIs and OEIs with a demonstrated need for capacity development and institutions with an established research capacity to provide opportunities for researchers at those HBCUs, OMIs and OEIs to develop first hand experience in the grants and contracts application process.

All research activities must be conducted for the purpose of capacity building. The research program must include one or more projects that are focused on issues related to improving the delivery of special education services and educational results for children with disabilities in urban and high poverty schools with predominantly minority enrollments. The program must examine the association between minority status and identification for, evaluation for and placement in special education. Other possible research topics may include:

(1) Effective intervention strategies that make a difference in the provision of a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE);

(2) Practices to promote the successful inclusion of children with disabilities in a least restrictive environment (LRE);

(3) Strategies for establishing high expectations for children with disabilities and increasing their participation in the general curriculum provided to all children;

(4) Increasing effective parental participation in the educational process,

especially for poor parents, minority parents, and parents with limited English proficiency;

(5) Effective disciplinary approaches, including behavioral management strategies, for ensuring a safe and disciplined learning environment;

(6) The effect of school-wide projects conducted under Title 1 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act on the delivery of special education; or

(7) Effective practices for promoting the coordination of special education services with health and social services for children with disabilities and their families.

The program shall ensure that findings are communicated in appropriate formats for researchers. The program shall also ensure that if findings are of importance to other audiences, such as teachers, administrators and parents, they are made available to Department of Education's technical assistance, training and dissemination projects for distribution to those audiences.

Projects must demonstrate experience and familiarity in research on children with disabilities in urban and high poverty schools with predominantly minority enrollments. The project must also demonstrate experience in capacity development in special education research, as well as a thorough understanding of the strengths and needs of HBCUs, OMIs and OEIs.

The project must budget for two trips annually to Washington, DC for: (1) A two-day Research Project Directors' meeting; and (2) an additional meeting to meet and collaborate with the project officer of the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) and with other relevant OSEP funded projects. The project must also coordinate activities

with the ongoing Policy Research Institute funded by OSEP.

#### Intergovernmental Review

This program is subject to the requirements of Executive Order 12372 and the regulations in 34 CFR Part 79. The objective of the Executive order is to foster an intergovernmental partnership and a strengthened federalism by relying on processes developed by State and local governments for coordination and review of proposed Federal financial assistance.

In accordance with the order, this document is intended to provide early notification of the Department's specific plans and actions for this program.

#### Invitation to Comment

Interested persons are invited to submit comments and recommendations regarding this proposed priority.

All comments submitted in response to this notice will be available for public inspection, during and after the comment period, in Room 3521, 300 C Street SW., Washington, DC, between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday of each week except Federal holidays.

Program Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1431. (Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number 84.029, Training Personnel for the Education of Individuals with Disabilities Program)

Dated: March 20, 1996.

Howard R. Moses,  
*Acting Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services.*  
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