

Discussion: The Secretary concurs with the importance of the focus areas listed above.

However, the priority as written does not preclude proposals on the suggested topics. The Secretary prefers that applicants be given flexibility to propose their particular area of inquiry, and believes it would be overly prescriptive to limit potential applicants to certain topics.

Changes: None.

Priority

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

Absolute Priority—Initial Career Awards

Background: There is a need to enable individuals in the initial phases of their careers to initiate and develop promising lines of research that would improve early intervention services for infants and toddlers, and special education for children and youth with disabilities. Support for research activities among individuals in the initial phases of their careers is intended to develop the capacity of the special education research community. This priority would address the additional need to provide support for a broad range of field-initiated research projects—focusing on the special education and related services for children and youth with disabilities and early intervention for infants and toddlers—consistent with the purpose of the program as described in 34 CFR 324.1.

Priority: The Secretary establishes an absolute priority for the purpose of awarding grants to eligible applicants for the support of individuals in the initial phases of their careers to initiate and develop promising lines of research consistent with the purposes of the program. For purposes of this priority, the initial phase of an individual's career is considered to be the first three years after completing a doctoral program and graduating (e.g., for fiscal year 1996 awards, projects may support individuals who completed a doctoral program and graduated no earlier than the 1991–92 academic year).

Projects must—

(a) Pursue a line of inquiry that reflects a programmatic strand of research emanating either from theory or a conceptual framework. The line of research must be evidenced by a series of related questions that establish directions for designing future studies extending beyond the support of this

award. The project is not intended to represent all inquiry related to the particular theory or conceptual framework; rather, it is expected to initiate a new line or advance an existing one;

(b) Include, in its design and conduct, sustained involvement with nationally recognized experts having substantive or methodological knowledge and expertise relevant to the proposed research. Experts do not have to be at the same institution or agency at which the project is located, but the interaction must be sufficient to develop the capacity of the researcher to pursue effectively the research into mid-career activities. At least 50 percent of the researcher's time must be devoted to the project;

(c) Prepare its procedures, findings, and conclusions in a manner that informs other interested researchers and is useful for advancing professional practice or improving programs and services to infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities and their families; and

(d) Disseminate project procedures, findings, and conclusions to appropriate research institutes and technical assistance providers.

A project's budget must include funds to attend the two-day Research Project Directors' meeting to be held in Washington, D.C. each year of the project.

Applicable Program Regulations: 34 CFR Part 324.

Program Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1441–1443.

(Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number 84.023, Research in Education of Individuals with Disabilities Program)

Dated: February 28, 1996.

Katherine D. Seelman,

Acting Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services.

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[CFDA No.: 84.023N]

Research in Education of Individuals With Disabilities Program; Notice Inviting Applications for New Awards for Fiscal Year (FY) 1996

Purpose of Program: To advance and improve the knowledge base and improve the practice of professionals, parents, and others providing early intervention, special education, and related services—including professionals in regular education environments—to provide children with disabilities effective instruction and enable them to successfully learn.

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

Eligible Applicants: Eligible applicants are State and local educational agencies, institutions of higher education, and other public agencies and nonprofit private organizations.

Applicable Regulations: (a) The Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR Parts 74, 75, 77, 80, 81, 82, 85, and 86; (b) The regulations for this program in 34 CFR Part 324; and (c) The priority in the notice of final priority for this program, as published elsewhere in this issue of the Federal Register, applies to this competition.

Note: The regulations in 34 CFR Part 86 apply to institutions of higher education only.

Deadline for Transmittal of Applications: May 17, 1996.

Applications Available: March 15, 1996.

Estimated Number of Awards: 5.

Project Period: Up to 36 months.

Available Funds: In fiscal year 1996, the Department proposes to allocate approximately \$375,000 to support an estimated 5 projects, with a maximum size of award of \$75,000 for the first twelve months of the project. Multi-year projects will be level funded unless there are increases in costs attributable to significant changes in activity level.

The Congress has not yet enacted a fiscal year 1996 appropriation for the Department of Education. The Department is publishing this notice in order to give potential applicants adequate time to prepare applications. The estimate of the amount of funds that will be available for this competition is based in part on the President's 1996 budget request and in part on the level of funding available for fiscal year 1995.

Potential applicants should note, however, that the Congress is considering proposals to eliminate or to reduce funding in 1996 for many of the discretionary grant programs administered by the Department, including the program under which this competition would be conducted. Final action on the 1996 appropriation may require the Department to cancel the competition announced in this notice.

Note: The Department of Education is not bound by any estimates in this notice.

For Applications and General Information Contact: Requests for applications and general information should be addressed to: Claudette Carey,

U.S. Department of Education, 600 Independence Avenue, S.W., Switzer Building, Room 3525, Washington, D.C. 20202-2641. Telephone: (202) 205-9864. FAX: (202) 205-8105. Internet: Claudette—Carey@ed.gov
Individuals who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the TDD number: (202) 205-8953.

For Technical Information Contact:
Doris Andres, U.S. Department of Education, 600 Independence Avenue, S.W., Room 3526, Switzer Building,

Washington, D.C. 20202-2641.
Telephone: (202) 205-8125. FAX: (202) 205-8105. Internet: Doris—Andres@ed.gov

Information about the Department's funding opportunities, including copies of application notices for discretionary grant competitions, can be viewed on the Department's electronic bulletin board (ED Board), telephone (202) 260-9950; on the Internet Gopher Server at GOPHER.ED.GOV (under Announcements, Bulletins, and Press Releases); or on the World Wide Web at

<http://www.ed.gov/money.html>
However, the official application notice for a discretionary grant competition is the notice published in the Federal Register.

Program Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1441-1443.

Dated: February 28, 1996.

Katherine D. Seelman,
Acting Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services.
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