

## DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

**National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research; Notice of Proposed Funding Priorities for Fiscal Years 1998–1999 for Disability and Rehabilitation Research Projects**

**SUMMARY:** The Secretary proposes funding priorities for two Disability and Rehabilitation Research Projects (DRRPs) under the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR) for fiscal years 1998–1999. The Secretary takes this action to focus research attention on areas of national need. These priorities are intended to improve rehabilitation services and outcomes for individuals with disabilities.

**DATES:** Comments must be received on or before July 8, 1998.

**ADDRESSES:** All comments concerning these proposed priorities should be addressed to Donna Nangle, U.S. Department of Education, 600 Maryland Avenue, S.W., room 3418, Switzer Building, Washington, D.C. 20202–2645. Comments may also be sent through the Internet:

comment@ed.gov

You must include the term “Burn and Traumatic Brain Injury—RRTC’s” in the subject line of your electronic message.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Donna Nangle, Telephone: (202) 205–5880. Individuals who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the TDD number at (202) 205–5516.

Internet: Donna\_Nangle@ed.gov

Individuals with disabilities may obtain this document in an alternate format (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, or computer diskette) on request to the contact person listed in the preceding paragraph.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** This notice contains proposed priorities under the Disability and Rehabilitation Research Projects and Centers Program for two Disability and Rehabilitation Research Projects related to: coordinating burn data and collaborative Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) research.

These proposed priorities support the National Education Goal that calls for every adult American to possess the skills necessary to compete in a global economy.

The authority for the Secretary to establish research priorities by reserving funds to support particular research activities is contained in sections 202(g) and 204 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (29 U.S.C. 761a(g) and 762).

The Secretary will announce the final priorities in a notice in the **Federal Register**. The final priorities will be determined by responses to this notice, available funds, and other considerations of the Department. Funding of a particular project depends on the final priority, the availability of funds, and the quality of the applications received. The publication of these proposed priorities does not preclude the Secretary from proposing additional priorities, nor does it limit the Secretary to funding only these priorities, subject to meeting applicable rulemaking requirements.

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

**Disability and Rehabilitation Research Projects**

Authority for Disability and Rehabilitation Research Projects (DRRPs) is contained in section 202 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (29 U.S.C. 761a). DRRPs carry out one or more of the following types of activities, as specified in 34 CFR 350.13–350.19: research, development, demonstration, training, dissemination, utilization, and technical assistance. Disability and Rehabilitation Research Projects develop methods, procedures, and rehabilitation technology that maximize the full inclusion and integration into society, employment, independent living, family support, and economic and social self-sufficiency of individuals with disabilities, especially individuals with the most severe disabilities. In addition, DRRPs improve the effectiveness of services authorized under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.

**Priorities**

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

**Proposed Priority 1: Burn Data Coordinating Project***Background*

In 1994 NIDRR established the Burn Injury Rehabilitation Model Systems of Care (Burn Model Systems) by awarding three 36-month projects. In 1997 NIDRR reestablished the Burn Model Systems with the award of four 60-month projects. These projects develop and demonstrate a comprehensive,

multidisciplinary model system of rehabilitative services for individuals with severe burns, and evaluate the efficacy of that system through the collection and analysis of uniform data on system benefits, costs, and outcomes. The projects study the course of recovery and outcomes following the delivery of a coordinated system of care including emergency care, acute care management, comprehensive inpatient rehabilitation, and long-term interdisciplinary follow-up services.

The Burn Model Systems projects serve a substantial number of patients, allowing the projects to conduct clinical research and program evaluation. In addition, the Burn Model Systems projects utilize a complex data collection and retrieval program with the capability to analyze the different system components and provide information on project effectiveness and benefits. The projects are intended to establish appropriate, uniform descriptors of rehabilitation care. Information is collected throughout the rehabilitation process. Systematic burn injury care permits long-term follow-up on the course of injury and the identification of continuing needs and results in areas such as functional outcome, health and rehabilitation services, procedures for cost-reimbursement and billing and community integration. The Burn Model Systems projects serve as regional and national models for program development and as information centers for consumers, families, and professionals.

In order to take full advantage of the data collected by individual Burn Model System projects, there is a need for a project to assist the projects in their research efforts and establish and maintain a combined database for short- and long-term outcome evaluations (functional, health, psycho-social and vocational status measures) and financial assessments (rehabilitation, professional and hospital charges) for various burn care and injury rehabilitation strategies.

*Proposed Priority 1*

The Secretary proposes to establish a Burn Data Coordinating Project for the purpose of maintaining a common database of burn care and injury rehabilitation information compiled by the Burn Model Systems projects supported by NIDRR. The project shall:

(1) Establish and maintain a common database through the data collection, entry, transfer, editing, quality control, issues resolution, and integration efforts of NIDRR’s Burn Injury Rehabilitation Model Systems’ projects;

(2) Provide technical assistance to the Burn Model Systems projects in the compilation of common data values from each Burn Injury Model System into a single quality information database for both joint and site specific management reporting, center evaluations and research analyses;

(3) Develop management reports on each Burn Injury Model System project's database-related activities and on trends that can be combined with and compared to other national data systems for evaluation of burn injury outcomes;

(4) Provide technical assistance to the Burn Model System projects in the preparation of scientific articles by providing statistical and analytical support;

(5) Provide technical assistance to the Burn Model Systems projects in the design, implementation, and analysis of specialized clinical studies that assess new burn injury rehabilitation methodologies; and

(6) Provide technical assistance to the Burn Model Systems projects in the clinical and systems analysis studies by collecting and analyzing data on patient characteristics, diagnoses, causes of injury, interventions, outcomes, and costs within a uniform standardized database.

In carrying out these purposes, the project must:

- As appropriate, collaborate with other model systems (such as spinal cord and traumatic brain injury model systems) data collection activities; and
- Link Burn Injury Model Systems, NIDRR Staff, and the project as required to facilitate database interactions and information dissemination opportunities.

### **Proposed Priority 2: Collaborative Research for Traumatic Brain Injury Model Systems**

#### *Background*

In 1987 NIDRR funded four research and demonstration projects to establish the Traumatic Brain Injury Model Systems of Care (TBI Model Systems) for individuals in need of comprehensive, multidisciplinary rehabilitative services. At present NIDRR supports five TBI Model Systems projects to study the course of recovery and outcomes following the delivery of a coordinated system of care including emergency care, acute neuro-trauma management, comprehensive inpatient rehabilitation, and long-term interdisciplinary follow-up services. The TBI Model Systems projects collect

and analyze uniform data from projects on system benefits, costs, and outcomes.

The TBI Model Systems projects serve a substantial number of individuals, allowing the projects to conduct clinical research and program evaluation, and maximize the potential for project replication. In addition, the systems have a complex data collection and retrieval program with the capability to analyze different system components and provide information on cost effectiveness and benefits. Information is collected throughout the rehabilitation process, permitting long-term follow-up on the course of injury, outcomes, and changes in employment status, community integration, substance abuse and family needs. The TBI Model Systems projects serve as regional and national models for program development and as information centers for consumers, families, and professionals.

On January 21, 1998, NIDRR published a notice in the **Federal Register** inviting applications to establish 10 additional TBI Model Systems projects (63 FR 3240). In conjunction with the establishment of these new TBI Model Systems projects, NIDRR is proposing to establish collaborative research projects to broaden knowledge and encourage multi-institutional studies of outcomes, rehabilitation interventions and service delivery system innovation for individuals with traumatic brain injury. The following are examples of collaborative research topics that the proposed project could carry out: evaluation of emerging pharmacologic interventions; examination of the effects of specific type and intensity of rehabilitative treatments; aging with TBI; secondary conditions of TBI; assessment and treatment in mild traumatic brain injury; impact of environmental factors on long term outcomes; impact of substance abuse on memory; and implications of managed care on availability and type of care for persons with TBI.

#### *Proposed Priority 2*

The Secretary proposes to establish collaborative research projects for the purpose of improving the knowledge about rehabilitation outcomes in order to improve the lives of persons with TBI, their families, and caregivers. A collaborative research project shall:

- (1) Investigate rehabilitation interventions or service delivery issues; and
- (2) Disseminate information based on that investigation to TBI Model Systems

projects and other appropriate rehabilitation settings.

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

- Collaborate with one or more of NIDRR TBI Model Systems projects; and
- Once a year, participate in the TBI Model Systems project directors' meeting.

### **Electronic Access to This Document**

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<http://ocfo.ed.gov/fedreg.htm>

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To use the pdf you must have the Adobe Acrobat Reader Program with Search, which is available free at either of the preceding sites. If you have questions about using the pdf, call the U.S. Government Printing Office at (202) 512-1530 or, toll free at 1-888-293-6498.

Anyone may also view these documents in text copy only on an electronic bulletin board of the Department. Telephone: (202) 219-1511 or, toll free, 1-800-222-4922. The documents are located under Option G—Files/Announcements, Bulletins and Press Releases.

**Note:** The official version of this document is the document published in the **Federal Register**.

### **Invitation to Comment**

Interested persons are invited to submit comments and recommendations regarding these proposed priorities. All comments submitted in response to this notice will be available for public inspection, during and after the comment period, in Room 3424, Switzer Building, 330 C Street S.W., Washington, D.C., between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday of each week except Federal holidays.

### **Applicable Program Regulations**

34 CFR Part 350.

**Program Authority:** 29 U.S.C. 760-762.

Dated: June 3, 1998.

(Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number 84.133A, Disability and Rehabilitation Research Projects)

**Curtis L. Richards,**

*Acting Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services.*

[FR Doc. 98-15165 Filed 6-5-98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4000-01-P