

## DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

### Special Education—Technical Assistance and Dissemination To Improve Services and Results for Children With Disabilities; Notice Inviting Applications for New Awards for Fiscal Year 1998

**SUMMARY:** On June 4, 1997, the President signed into law Public Law 105-17, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997, amending the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

This notice provides closing dates and other information regarding the transmittal of applications for fiscal year 1998 competitions under one program authorized by IDEA, as amended: Special Education—Technical Assistance and Dissemination to Improve Services and Results for Children with Disabilities (one priority).

This notice supports the National Education Goals by helping to improve results for children with disabilities.

#### Waiver of Rulemaking

It is generally the practice of the Secretary to offer interested parties the opportunity to comment on proposed priorities. However, section 661(e)(2) of IDEA makes the Administrative Procedure Act (5 U.S.C. 553) inapplicable to the priorities in this notice. In order to make awards on a timely basis, the Secretary has decided to publish this priority in final under the authority of section 661(e)(2).

#### General Requirements

(a) Projects funded under this notice must make positive efforts to employ and advance in employment qualified individuals with disabilities in project activities (see Section 606 of IDEA);

(b) Applicants and grant recipients funded under this notice must involve individuals with disabilities or parents of individuals with disabilities in planning, implementing, and evaluating the projects (see Section 661(f)(1)(A) of IDEA);

(c) Projects funded under these priorities must budget for a two-day Project Directors' meeting in Washington, D.C. during each year of the project; and

(d) Grant recipients funded under this notice must carry out activities that benefit, directly or indirectly, children with disabilities of all ages (see Section 661(a)(4) of IDEA).

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

### Special Education—Technical Assistance and Dissemination To Improve Services and Results for Children With Disabilities

**Purpose of Program:** The purpose of this program is to provide technical assistance and information through such mechanisms as institutes, regional resource centers, clearinghouses and programs that support States and local entities in building capacity, to improve early intervention, educational, and transitional services and results for children with disabilities and their families, and address systemic-change goals and priorities.

**Eligible Applicants:** State and local educational agencies; institutions of higher education; other public agencies; private nonprofit organizations; outlying areas; freely associated States; Indian tribes or tribal organizations; and for-profit organizations.

**Applicable Regulations:** (a) The Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR parts 74, 75, 77, 79, 80, 81, 82, 85, and 86; and (b) The selection criteria included in regulations for this program in 34 CFR 320.30.

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

**Priority:** Under section 685 of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and 34 CFR 75.105(c)(3), the Secretary gives an absolute preference to applications that meet the following priority. The Secretary funds under this competitions only those applications that meet this absolute priority:

**Absolute Priority—National Clearinghouse on Careers and Professions Related to Early Intervention and Education for Children With Disabilities (84.326P)**

#### Background

During the last ten years, significant changes have had an impact on professional development programs. The characteristics of children with disabilities have changed and in many ways have become more complex. Today, there are more children who have entered life with marked disabilities, who are expected to continue to thrive, and who require interdisciplinary approaches that provide them with essential support. Additionally, the cultural and linguistic characteristics of the student population have changed significantly. In order for educational programs to be effective, the Nation's schools need a work force of educators, related services providers, and early intervention personnel that is

more culturally and linguistically diverse than in the past. Professional development programs have significantly changed as well, through new developments in assistive technology, changes in financial support for students entering special education fields, and, in particular, changes in Federal legislation.

The IDEA Amendments of 1997 direct the Secretary to provide technical assistance through clearinghouses and other means in order to build capacity for improving early intervention, education, and transition services and results for children with disabilities, and their families. The National Clearinghouse on Careers and Professions Related to Early Intervention and Education for Children with Disabilities supported through this priority will be responsible for identifying and responding to exigent issues, emerging trends, and strategies for ensuring an adequate supply of qualified professionals and paraprofessionals available to meet the needs of children with disabilities.

It is essential that the Clearinghouse establishes and maintains varied paths for the dissemination of a wide array of critical information, and provides information to a broad base of individuals, including students, parents, administrators, and researchers. It is also necessary for the Clearinghouse to coordinate its services with individuals and professional organizations and disseminate comprehensive materials related to the recruitment, preparation and effectiveness of professionals and paraprofessionals who provide services to children with disabilities and their families. For the purposes of this priority, "professionals" include early intervention personnel, special education teachers, general education teachers, adapted physical educators, and related services providers such as psychologists, occupational and physical therapists, orientation and mobility specialists, and speech-language pathologists.

"Paraprofessionals" include paraeducators, teachers' aides, instructional assistants, occupational and physical therapy assistants, and speech-language pathology assistants.

**Priority:** The Secretary establishes an absolute priority to support a national clearinghouse that works toward ensuring the availability of an adequate number and the high quality of personnel to improve services and results for infants and children with disabilities. In order to accomplish these purposes, the clearinghouse must:

(a) Conduct nation-wide, outreach activities to encourage individuals to

pursue careers in special education. To accomplish this objective, the clearinghouse must develop, implement and maintain comprehensive and coordinated communication campaigns that:

- (1) Utilize the full range of media outlets;
- (2) Reflect cutting edge formats and designs;
- (3) Are customized in design and communication approach to promote the full range of career opportunities in special education and related services and early intervention services;
- (4) Are customized in design and communication approach to attract individuals from culturally and economically diverse backgrounds and individuals with disabilities, across varying age levels and professional experiences.

(b) Conduct activities that assist State educational agencies (SEAs), local educational agencies (LEAs), institutions of higher education (IHEs), agencies that administer the Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities program under IDEA, and other appropriate entities in improving the quality of professionals and paraprofessionals who serve children with disabilities, including children with limited English proficiency and children from culturally diverse backgrounds. To accomplish this objective, the clearinghouse must:

- (1) Collect, synthesize, and disseminate information on emerging approaches to professional preparation and career development for special education, related service, and early intervention personnel;
- (2) Collect and disseminate information on current national, State, and professional standards, competencies, dual certifications, and reciprocity agreements applied by States and professional organizations to the credentialing or licensing of professional and paraprofessional personnel;
- (3) Identify and disseminate information on effective strategies, through collaboration with appropriate entities, to identify and promote the credentialing of current early intervention, education, transition, and related services personnel who are lacking permanent certification or license;
- (4) Develop and disseminate, through collaboration with appropriate entities, guidelines for instituting standards or certifications for paraprofessionals, where such standards do not exist; and
- (5) Develop and disseminate periodic highlights or reviews of pressing issues, trends, and emerging research regarding professional development programs for

special education, related service, and early intervention personnel.

(c) Conduct activities that would promote an adequate supply of qualified professionals and paraprofessionals who serve children with disabilities. To accomplish this objective, the clearinghouse must:

- (1) Collect and disseminate information on the ongoing and emerging areas of personnel needs identified by States, LEAs, and other entities;
- (2) Collect and disseminate information on the availability of qualified service providers, including those from traditionally underrepresented populations (e.g., persons from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and persons with disabilities);
- (3) Collect and disseminate information on preservice professional development programs that prepare both professionals and paraprofessionals, including programs that provide special education preparation for general educators. At a minimum, this information must include, for each program: the areas of preparation and their academic level, the program head or chair, telephone, e-mail, FAX, mailing address and web address, if available, the number of full or part time faculty, tuition costs, and the availability of stipends or scholarships. Programs that receive Federal support for students should be identified with the source of those funds, particularly if from the Office of Special Education Programs or other offices in the U.S. Department of Education. Preservice professional development programs that provide specific services for students with disabilities, and the description of those services, must also be included. The Clearinghouse is also encouraged to collect information on the numbers of students enrolled, and graduating from, each of the identified programs;
- (4) Arrange with producers of scholarship publications to include in such publications information on scholarship opportunities available through OSEP-supported professional development programs; and
- (5) Identify, synthesize, and disseminate information on effective strategies used to recruit and retain both professionals and paraprofessionals who provide services to children with disabilities. Effective strategies should be identified for use by States, LEAs, and IHEs. Special emphasis should be placed on identifying recruitment and retention strategies and materials that have been particularly effective in urban and rural settings, and with traditionally

under-represented populations (e.g., minorities and persons with disabilities).

(d) In order to satisfy the objectives in paragraphs (a), (b), and (c), the clearinghouse must also:

- (1) Conduct timely updates of all information and data bases to ensure that information disseminated is accurate and current;
- (2) Establish advisory groups to provide recommendations to the clearinghouse relative to the activities or products described above and to ensure that all constituency needs are met;
- (3) Employ multiple dissemination mechanisms and approaches, including the establishment and maintenance of a user-friendly web site that permits the downloading of all clearinghouse information bases and incorporates hotlinks to available training programs and other relevant information sources; and
- (4) Establish and implement a comprehensive system of evaluation to determine the impact of the clearinghouse activities. Evaluations should be conducted at least annually, identify strategies for improvement, and include relevant achievements.

Under this priority, the Secretary will make one award for a cooperative agreement with a project period of up to 60 months subject to the requirements of 34 CFR 75.253(a) for continuation awards. In determining whether to continue the clearinghouse for the fourth and fifth years of the project period, the Secretary, in addition to the requirements of 34 CFR 75.253(a) will consider:

- (a) The recommendation of a review team consisting of three experts selected by the Secretary. The team's review, including a two-day site visit to the clearinghouse, is to be conducted during the last half of the project's second year. Costs associated with the services to be performed by the review team must also be included in the clearinghouse budget for year two. These costs are estimated to be approximately \$4,000; and
- (b) The timeliness and effectiveness with which all requirements of the negotiated cooperative agreement have been or are being met by the clearinghouse.

*Project Period:* Up to 60 months.

*Maximum Award:* The Secretary rejects and does not consider an application that proposes a budget exceeding \$700,000 for any single budget period of twelve months. The Secretary may change the maximum amount through a notice published in the **Federal Register**.

*Page Limits:* Part III of the application, the application narrative, is where an

applicant addresses the selection criteria that are used by reviewers in evaluating the application. An applicant must limit Part III to the equivalent of no more than 70 double-spaced pages, using the following standards: (1) A "page" is 8½"×11" (on one side only) with one-inch margins (top, bottom, and sides). (2) All text in the application narrative, including titles, headings, footnotes, quotations, references, and captions, as well as all text in charts, tables, figures, and graphs, must be double-spaced (no more than 3 lines per vertical inch). If using a proportional computer font, use no smaller than a 12-point font, and an average character density no greater than 18 characters per inch. If using a nonproportional font or a typewriter, do not use more than 12 characters to the inch.

The page limit does not apply to Part I—the cover sheet; Part II—the budget section (including the narrative budget justification); Part IV—the assurances and certifications; or the one-page

abstract, resumes, bibliography, and letters of support. However, all of the application narrative *must* be included in Part III. If an application narrative uses a smaller print size, spacing, or margin that would make the narrative exceed the equivalent of the page limit, the application will not be considered for funding.

**For Applications and General Information Contact:** Requests for applications and general information should be addressed to the Grants and Contracts Services Team, 600 Independence Avenue, S.W., room 3317, Switzer Building, Washington, D.C. 20202-2641. The preferred method for requesting information is to FAX your request to: (202) 205-8717. Telephone: (202) 260-9182.

Individuals who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the TDD number: (202) 205-8953.

Individuals with disabilities may obtain a copy of this notice or the

application packages referred to in this notice in an alternate format (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotape, or computer diskette) by contacting the Department as listed above. However, the Department is not able to reproduce in an alternate format the standard forms included in the application package.

**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 those programs.

#### INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT APPLICATION NOTICE FOR FISCAL YEAR 1998

CFDA No. and name	Applications available	Application deadline date	Deadline for intergovernmental review	Maximum award (per year)*	Page limit**	Estimated number of awards
84.326P National Clearinghouse on Careers and Professions Related to Early Intervention and Education for Children with Disabilities .....	7/24/98	8/24/98	9/22/98	\$700,000	70	1

\* The Secretary rejects and does not consider an application that proposes a budget exceeding the amount listed for each priority for any single budget period of 12 months.

\*\* Applicants must limit the Application Narrative, Part III of the Application, to the page limits noted above. Please refer to the "Page Limit" section of this notice for the specific requirements. The Secretary rejects and does not consider an application that does not adhere to this requirement.

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which is available free at either of the previous 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.

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

Dated: July 14, 1998.

**Judith E. Heumann,**

*Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services.*

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