

## DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

### National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research; Notice of Final Funding Priority for Fiscal Year 1999 for a Disability and Rehabilitation Research Project

**AGENCY:** Department of Education.

**SUMMARY:** The Secretary announces a final funding priority for a Disability and Rehabilitation Research Project (DRRP) by the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR) for fiscal year 1999. The Secretary takes this action to focus research attention on areas of national need. This priority is intended to improve rehabilitation services and outcomes for individuals with disabilities.

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** This priority takes effect on June 28, 1999.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Donna Nangle, U.S. Department of Education, 600 Maryland Avenue, SW., Room 3418, Switzer Building, Washington, DC. 20202-2645. Telephone: (202) 205-5880. Individuals who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the TDD number at (202) 205-2742. 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.

### Waiver of Rulemaking

Pursuant to section 437(d)(1) of the General Education Provisions Act, the Secretary has determined that this priority is exempt from the Administrative Procedure Act (5 U.S.C. 553). Section 437(d)(1) exempts from rulemaking the first grant competition under a new or substantially revised program authority. This is NIDRR's first grant competition under Section 21(b)(2)(A) since that Section was amended by the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** This notice contains a final priority under the Disability and Rehabilitation Research Projects and Centers Program for a DRRP on Building Research Capacity. There is a reference in the proposed priority to NIDRR's Long-Range Plan (LRP). The LRP can be accessed on the World Wide Web at: <http://www.ed.gov/legislation/FedRegister/announcements/1998-4/102698a.html>.

This final priority supports 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. 762(g) and 764).

**Note:** This notice of final priority 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 priority.

### Disability and Rehabilitation Research Projects

Authority for Disability and Rehabilitation Research Projects (DRRPs) is contained in section 204(a) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (29 U.S.C. 764(a)). 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.

### 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 priority.

### Priority: Building Research Capacity

#### Introduction

The Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998 modified Section 21, Traditionally Underserved Populations. Section 21 is based on Congressional findings that the demographic profile of the United States is changing to include higher proportions of individuals from racial and ethnic minorities and that the prevalence of disability is disproportionately high among racial and ethnic minorities. At the same time, there have been documented patterns of inequitable treatment for minorities in the vocational rehabilitation process; and there is a need to have more qualified individuals from traditionally

underserved populations working in the field of rehabilitation.

Section 21 provides for a set-aside of one percent of appropriations for programs under certain Titles of the Act to address these problems through activities carried out under those programs. This priority, announced under Section 21(b)(2)(A), is to support an award to a minority entity or Indian tribe to carry out activities authorized under Title II of the Act. As defined by the Act in Section 21(b)(5)(B), a minority entity means a Historically Black College or University (HBCU), a Hispanic-serving institution of higher education, an American Indian tribal college or university, or another institution of higher education whose minority student enrollment is at least 50 percent.

Section 204(a)(2)(B)(vi) of Title II authorizes NIDRR to support "related activities which hold the promise of increasing knowledge and improving methods in the rehabilitation of individuals with disabilities . . . particularly individuals . . . who are members of populations that are unserved or underserved by programs under this Act." Section 202(h)(2)(F) requires that the LRP "specify plans for widespread dissemination of the results of covered activities that concern individuals with disabilities who are members of minority groups or of populations that are unserved or underserved by programs carried out under this Act."

The LRP, published in proposed form in the **Federal Register** on October 26, 1998, recognizes the existence of unique issues for disabled individuals from minority backgrounds, and also commits NIDRR to implement capacity building activities to address these problems. The LRP is based on a "new paradigm of disability" that defines disability as a product of the interaction between individual factors and the characteristics of the natural, built, cultural, and social environments. Two implications of the new paradigm for research are the need to understand and assess the contextual variables that, in part, comprise disability, and the concomitant need to develop the capacity of the research field to address these factors. These contextual variables include demographics, culture, income, education, familial supports, community accessibility, and attitudinal variables, among other factors.

The LRP also identifies an "emerging universe of disability," defined as an increasingly disproportionate distribution of disability, and its causes and consequences, among different social and economic groupings in

American society. In particular, the increasing importance of poverty, isolation, and low educational levels—all of which are strongly correlated with minority status—as both causes and consequences of disability has important implications for how research is conducted and for the development of the capacity of researchers to conduct studies of these factors.

The LRP also commits NIDRR to advance the capacity for rigorous qualitative and quantitative research and use of state-of-the-art methodologies by providing advanced training for researchers, including those with disabilities and those from minority backgrounds; develop the capacity of researchers to explicate disability as a contextual phenomenon; and to prepare researchers to conduct disability studies that incorporate the cultural context of disability. The LRP also includes a specific provision for increasing the disability research capacity of institutions of higher education that serve primarily minority students. NIDRR has a history of and commitment to making research an inclusive, collaborative, and coordinated undertaking. Adherence to this principle has resulted in on-going capacity building efforts that involve training those who participate in all aspects of the disability and rehabilitation research field.

NIDRR recognizes the need to expand the scope of its capacity building activities to increase the participation of persons from minority backgrounds and to increase awareness of minority issues among all NIDRR researchers. NIDRR believes that the quality and benefits of research related to minorities with disabilities can be enhanced by providing information, training, collaborations, and linkages to expertise for both minority and other researchers in the disability field.

#### Priority:

The Secretary will establish a DRRP to improve the quality and utility of research related to minority individuals with disabilities by (a) building capacity of researchers, especially those from minority backgrounds, to conduct disability research, especially related to rehabilitation of minorities, and (b) enhancing knowledge and awareness of issues related to minority individuals with disabilities among disability and rehabilitation researchers generally. The project must:

(1) Identify barriers to collaboration and information exchange among minority entities, Indian tribes, and other disability researchers, especially NIDRR-funded projects and centers, and

develop strategies to overcome those barriers;

(2) Facilitate on-going communication, collaboration, and exchange of expertise between minority entities—including Indian tribes—and researchers, especially NIDRR grantees, to implement the strategies identified in paragraph (1); and

(3) Develop and provide training activities, including but not limited to conferences, workshops, in-service training, and distance education, that will: (a) expand knowledge about minorities with disabilities; (b) improve research skills and familiarity with appropriate methodologies, including the skills of researchers from minority populations; and (c) enhance the capacity for appropriate dissemination of information about and to underserved populations with disabilities.

#### Electronic Access to This Document

You may review 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 either of the following sites:

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

<http://www.ed.gov/news.html>.

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 (GPO) at (202) 512-1530 or, toll free at 1-888-293-6498.

**Note:** The official version of this document is the document 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>

**Applicable Program Regulations:** 34 CFR Part 350.

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

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

Dated: May 25, 1999.

**Judith E. Heumann,**

*Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services.*

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## DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

[CFDA No.: 84.133A-15]

### Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research; Notice Inviting Applications and Pre-application Meeting for a New Disability and Rehabilitation Research Project for Fiscal Year 1999

**SUMMARY:** This notice provides closing dates and other information regarding the transmittal of applications for a fiscal year 1999 competition by the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research. The purpose of the Disability and Rehabilitation Research Project (DRRP) is to improve the effectiveness of services authorized under the Act. Section 21 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, requires that NIDRR reserve a portion of its appropriated funds for a fiscal year to carry out certain activities. Section 21(b)(2)(A) authorizes NIDRR to make awards to minority entities and Indian tribes to carry out activities authorized under Title II of the Act.

This notice also invites interested parties to participate in a pre-application meeting to discuss the funding priority and receive technical assistance through individual consultation and information about the funding priority. The pre-application meeting for the DRRP will be held on June 25, 1999 at the Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Room 3065, Switzer Building, 330 C Street, SW., Washington, DC between 9:00 a.m. and 11:00 p.m. NIDRR staff will also be available at this location from 12:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. on that same day to provide technical assistance through individual consultation and information about the funding priority. For further information contact Dr. Constance Pledger, U.S. Department of Education, Room 3423, Switzer Building, 600 Maryland Avenue, SW., Washington, DC 20202. Individuals who use a telecommunications device (TDD) may call the TDD number at (202) 205-5516. NIDRR will make alternate arrangements to accommodate interested parties who are unable to attend the pre-application meeting in person.

#### Assistance to Individuals With Disabilities at the Public Meeting

The meeting site is accessible to individuals with disabilities. If you will need an auxiliary aid or service to participate in the meeting (e.g., interpreting service, assistive listening