

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services****Notice of Proposed Priorities**

SUMMARY: The Secretary proposes priorities for three programs administered by the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. The Secretary may use these priorities 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. The proposed priorities are intended to ensure wide and effective use of program funds.

DATES: Comments must be received on or before March 22, 1996 for the Training Personnel for the Education of Individuals with Disabilities Program (CFDA 84.029) and the Program for Children and Youth with Serious Emotional Disturbance (CFDA 84.237); and April 22, 1996 for the Research in the Education of Individuals with Disabilities Program (CFDA 84.023).

ADDRESSES: All comments concerning proposed priorities 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: The name, address, and telephone number of the person at the Department to contact for information on each specific proposed priority is listed under that priority.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: This notice contains four proposed priorities under three programs authorized by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, as follows: Research in Education of Individuals with Disabilities Program (one proposed priority); Training Personnel for the Education of Individuals with Disabilities Program (two proposed priorities); and Program for Children and Youth with Serious Emotional Disturbance (one proposed priority). The purpose of each program is stated separately under the title of that program.

These proposed priorities would support 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 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 particular projects depends on the availability of funds, the content of the final priorities, and the quality of the applications received. Further, priorities could be affected by enactment of legislation reauthorizing these programs. 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. Notices inviting applications under these competitions will be published in the Federal Register concurrent with or following publication of the notices of final priorities.

Research in Education of Individuals With Disabilities Program

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 these children to learn successfully.

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—Research Institute to Accelerate Learning for Children With Disabilities With Curricular and Instructional Interventions***Background***

The consequences of failing to learn are serious. Lack of learning in one domain reduces an individual's capacity to benefit from educational experience. Failure establishes a self-perpetuating cycle and negatively affects the individual's disposition toward lifelong learning, employment, and contribution to society. Most children with disabilities face challenges to learning. These challenges are amplified as calls are made for higher standards to be achieved by all students, including children with disabilities, and as more children with disabilities are educated in general education classrooms.

Evidence from the National Longitudinal Transition Study indicates children with disabilities are not learning subject matter content. An urgency exists to develop powerful

curricular and instructional interventions that maximize rates of development, promote generalized learning, and reduce discrepancies between their performance and that of their peers.

Intervention research has demonstrated that children with disabilities possess the potential to learn, participate, and contribute in school, home, community, and work place. Research on instructional interventions for children with disabilities has been the hallmark of special education research. For example, research on direct instruction, behavioral management interventions, learning strategies, peer mediated learning, and reciprocal teaching has led to improvements in professional practice.

Yet, single solution interventions are insufficient for teaching children with disabilities complex subject matter content. In many instances, these interventions are content free. Moreover, little empirical evidence is available on the context of the classroom for supporting the implementation of these solutions.

Priority

The Secretary proposes to establish an absolute priority for the purpose of establishing a research institute to study kindergarten through grade six curricular and instructional classroom based interventions that accelerate subject matter learning for children with disabilities and promote its sustained use by practitioners. These studies must examine—

(1) The effectiveness of the intervention for children with disabilities; and

(2) The classroom context that supports the implementation of the interventions that produce and sustain positive learning outcomes for children with disabilities, including such factors as classroom groups; classroom and cross-classroom management strategies; curriculum design principles; classroom settings; instructional materials; amount of time on task; integration into the curriculum; and teacher actions, skills, and attitudes.

The research may include, but need not be limited to, studying classroom based exemplars and models, designing and implementing interventions, and collecting student and teacher data from exemplars, using a rich array of research methods to reach the intended goals of this priority and as articulated by the proposed research hypotheses.

The research Institute must—

(a) Design and conduct a strategic program of research that focuses on

helping students with disabilities in kindergarten through grade six learn subject matter content in critical areas such as reading and math, and builds upon the existing research knowledge for teaching children with disabilities;

(b) Design and conduct a strategic program of research across multiple sites to represent organizational and demographic diversity;

(c) Collect, analyze, and communicate student outcome data and supporting context data; and multiple outcome data for teachers, parents, administrators, as appropriate;

(d) Collaborate with experts and researchers in related subject matter and methodological fields, as appropriate for the program of research, to design and conduct the strategic program of research;

(e) Collaborate with communication specialists and professional and advocacy organizations to ensure that findings are prepared in formats that are useable for specific audiences such as teachers, administrators, and other service providers;

(f) Develop linkages with Education Department technical assistance providers to communicate research findings and distribute products;

(g) Provide training and research opportunities for a limited number of graduate students including students who are from traditionally underrepresented groups; and

(h) Meet with the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) project officer in the first four months of the project to review the program of research and communication approaches.

The project must budget for two trips annually to Washington, D.C. for: (1) A two-day Research Project Directors' meeting; and (2) another meeting to meet and collaborate with the OSEP project officer.

Under this priority, the Secretary anticipates making 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 Institute 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—

(1) The recommendation of a review team consisting of three experts selected by the Secretary. The services of the review team, including a two-day site visit to the project are to be performed during the last half of the Institute's second year and may be included in that year's evaluation required under 34 CFR 75.590. Costs associated with the

services to be performed by the review team must also be included in the institute's budget for year two. These costs are estimated to be approximately \$4,000;

(2) The timeliness and effectiveness with which all requirements of the negotiated cooperative agreement have been or are being met by the Research Institute; and

(3) The degree to which the Institute's research designs and methodologies demonstrate the potential for advancing significant new knowledge.

For Further Information Contact: Ellen Schiller, U.S. Department of Education, 600 Independence Avenue SW., Room 3523, Switzer Building, Washington, D.C. 20202-2641. Telephone: (202) 205-8123. FAX: (202) 205-8105. Internet: Ellen_Schiller@ed.gov

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

Program Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1441 and 1442.

Training Personnel for the Education of Individuals With Disabilities Program

Purpose of Program: The purpose of Grants for Personnel Training is to increase the quantity and improve the quality of personnel available to serve infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities.

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 these competitions only applications that meet these absolute priorities:

Proposed Absolute Priority 1—Preparation of Special Education, Related Services, and Early Intervention Personnel to Serve Infants, Toddlers, Children, and Youth With Low-Incidence Disabilities

Background

The national demand for educational, related services, and early intervention personnel to serve infants, toddlers, children and youth with low-incidence disabilities exceeds available supply. However, because of the small number of these personnel needed in each State, institutions of higher education and individual States are reluctant to support the needed professional development programs. Of the programs that are available, not all are producing graduates with the prerequisite skills needed to meet the needs of the low-incidence disability population. Federal support is required to ensure an

adequate supply of personnel to serve children with low-incidence disabilities and to improve the quality of appropriate training programs so that graduates possess necessary prerequisite skills.

Priority: The Secretary proposes to establish an absolute priority to support projects that increase the number and quality of personnel to serve children with low-incidence disabilities. This priority supports projects that provide preservice preparation of special educators, early intervention personnel, and related services personnel at the associate, baccalaureate, master's, or specialist level.

The term "low-incidence disability" means a visual or hearing impairment, or simultaneous visual and hearing impairments, significant mental retardation, or an impairment such as severe and multiple disabilities, severe orthopedic disabilities, autism, and traumatic brain injury, for which a small number of highly skilled and knowledgeable personnel are needed.

Applicants may propose to prepare one or more of the following types of personnel:

(1) Special educators including early childhood, speech and language, adapted physical education, and assistive technology personnel;

(2) Related services personnel who provide developmental, corrective, and other supportive services that assist children with low-incidence disabilities to benefit from special education. Both comprehensive programs and specialty components of programs that emphasize children with low-incidence disabilities within a broader discipline may be supported; or

(3) Early intervention personnel who serve children birth through age 2 with disabilities and their families. Early intervention personnel include persons prepared to provide training for, or be consultants to, service providers and case managers.

The Secretary particularly encourages projects that address the needs of more than one State, provide multi-disciplinary training, and include collaboration among several institutions and between training institutions and public schools. In addition, projects that foster successful coordination between special education and regular education professional development programs to meet the needs of children with low-incidence disabilities in inclusive settings are encouraged.

Projects must:

(a) Show how their proposed activities address the need for trained personnel to serve children with low-incidence disabilities, as identified in

State Comprehensive Systems of Personnel Development, in the State or States where personnel trained by the project are expected to be employed;

(b) Prepare personnel to address the specialized needs of children with low-incidence disabilities from different cultural and language backgrounds;

(c) Incorporate best practices in the design of the program and the curricula;

(d) Incorporate curricula that focus on improving results for children with low-incidence disabilities;

(e) Promote high expectations for students with low-incidence disabilities and foster access to the general curriculum in the regular classroom, wherever appropriate; and

(f) Develop linkages with Education Department technical assistance providers to communicate information on program models used and program effectiveness.

Under this absolute priority, the Secretary plans to award approximately:

- 55 percent of the available funds for projects that support careers in special education, including early childhood educators;

- 30 percent of the available funds for projects that support careers in related services; and

- 15 percent of the available funds for projects that support careers in early intervention.

For Further Information Contact:

Verna Hart, U.S. Department of Education, 600 Independence Avenue, S.W., Room 3519, Switzer Building, Washington, D.C. 20202-2641. Telephone: (202) 205-5392. FAX: (202) 205-9070. Internet: Verna_Hart@ed.gov
Individuals who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the TDD number: (202) 205-7381.

Proposed Absolute Priority 2—Preparation of Personnel to Serve Children and Youth With High-Incidence Disabilities

Background: In many States, there are insufficient numbers of personnel available to meet the needs of children with high-incidence disabilities. In addition, the quality of personnel preparation programs needs to be improved so that professionals will be better prepared to help children with high-incidence disabilities reach their individual developmental goals and meet challenging standards.

Priority: The Secretary proposes to establish an absolute priority to support projects that increase the number and quality of personnel to serve children ages 3 through 21 with high-incidence disabilities such as mild or moderate mental retardation, speech or language

impairments, emotional disturbance, or specific learning disabilities. This priority supports projects that provide preservice preparation of special educators, including early childhood educators and related services personnel.

A preservice program is defined as one that leads toward a degree, certification, or professional standard, and may be supported at the associate, baccalaureate, master's or specialist level. A preservice program may include the preparation of currently employed personnel who are seeking additional degrees, certifications, or endorsements.

Applicants may propose to prepare one or more of the following types of personnel:

(1) Special educators including speech and language, adapted physical education, and adaptive technology personnel;

(2) Related services personnel who provide developmental, corrective, and other supportive services that assist children with high-incidence disabilities to benefit from special education; and

(3) Early childhood special education or related services personnel who address the needs of children age three through five with high-incidence disabilities and their families.

The Secretary particularly encourages projects that foster successful coordination between special education and regular education professional development programs to meet the needs of children with high-incidence disabilities in inclusive settings.

Projects must:

(a) Show through letters of acknowledgement from States or other documentation that the proposed professional development activities support the Comprehensive Systems of Personnel Development of the State or States where personnel prepared by the project are expected to be employed;

(b) Show through letters of acknowledgement from States or other documentation that the proposed personnel preparation meets the standards for employment in the State or States where personnel prepared by the project are expected to be employed;

(c) Prepare personnel to address the needs of children with high-incidence disabilities from different cultural and language backgrounds;

(d) Incorporate best practices in the design of the program and curricula;

(e) Incorporate curricula that focus on improving results for children with high-incidence disabilities;

(f) Promote high expectations for children with high-incidence disabilities and foster access to the

general curriculum in the regular classroom, wherever appropriate; and

(g) Develop linkages with Education Department technical assistance providers to communicate information on program models used and program effectiveness.

Under this absolute priority, the Secretary plans to award approximately:

- 55 percent of the available funds for projects that support careers in special education;

- 30 percent of the available funds for projects that support careers in related services; and,

- 15 percent of the available funds for projects that support careers in early childhood education.

For Further Information Contact:

Martha Bokee, U.S. Department of Education, 600 Independence Avenue, S.W., Room 3078, Switzer Building, Washington, D.C. 20202-2641. Telephone: (202) 205-5509. FAX: (202) 205-9070. Internet: Martha_Bokee@ed.gov. Individuals who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the TDD number: (202) 205-7381.

Program Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1431.

Program for Children and Youth With Serious Emotional Disturbance

Purpose of Program: To support projects designed to improve special education and related services to children and youth with serious emotional disturbance. Types of projects that may be supported under the program include, but are not limited to, research, development, and demonstration projects. Funds may also be used to develop and demonstrate approaches to assist and prevent children with emotional and behavioral problems from developing serious emotional disturbance.

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—Center to Promote Collaboration and Communication of Effective Practices for Children With, or At Risk of Developing, Serious Emotional Disturbance (SED)

Background: "Collaboration" is one of the seven strategic targets identified in the National Agenda for Achieving Better Results for Children and Youth with SED, developed by the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) with extensive participation by a variety of individuals and organizations.

Collaboration is critically important, at Federal, State, and local levels: "To promote systems change resulting in the development of coherent services built around the individual needs of children and youth with and at risk of developing SED." In the past, there has been too little interaction between agencies and service providers, e.g., education, mental health, child welfare, and juvenile justice. Lack of coordination between and across agencies has had a negative impact on children and families. The new direction, demonstrated in many of the projects currently funded by OSEP and other agencies, is toward more "seamless" and "wrap-around" service delivery models built around the needs of students, families, and communities—systems that coordinate services, articulate responsibilities, and provide system-wide and agency-level accountability.

Many of these new model programs are only in their infancy, but are already documenting their effectiveness. It is essential that mechanisms be put in place to foster the identification, development, and exchange of information about these innovative projects—to communicate their findings and approaches nationally to other communities and agencies that are seeking solutions to the needs of children with mental health problems and their families.

Priority: The Secretary proposes to establish an absolute priority to support one cooperative agreement for a center to promote Federal, State, and local interagency collaboration and facilitate the identification, development, and exchange of information on effective practices to improve services for children with SED and for children with emotional and behavioral problems who are at risk of developing SED. The center must coordinate and collaborate with related centers and activities across agencies, including but not limited to: OSEP's ongoing activities to validate and communicate the SED National Agenda; other OSEP and Department-supported technical assistance and information exchange activities; and the two rehabilitation research and training centers (RRTCs) on children's mental health jointly funded by the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR) and the Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS). The center must provide and support information identification, development, and exchange for Federal, State, and community-based projects and programs providing services for children with or at risk of SED in

accordance with a plan that describes the centers schedule.

The center must:

(1) Establish working relationships with Federal, State, and local programs and projects to identify and develop useful and usable information for, and to foster the exchange of usable and useful information with—

(a) Federal, State, and community-based programs and projects to assist them in their efforts; and,

(b) Broader audiences of individuals and organizations including parents and family members of children with or at risk of serious emotional disturbance.

(2) Ensure and facilitate access, including electronic and telecommunication access, to information on SED, including information on projects funded by the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services; other offices in the Department of Education; the Departments of Health and Human Services, Labor, and Justice; and other sources such as foundations and associations, as appropriate.

(3) Evaluate the impact of information identification, development, and exchange activities.

It is anticipated that initial information exchanges will rely heavily upon information already produced by programs and projects, but that additional information will be synthesized and developed by the center based on findings from the available research and information/findings provided to the center by programs and projects.

The center must also ensure that the targets and cross-cutting themes of OSEP's National Agenda for Achieving Better Results for Children and Youth with SED are addressed in the center's information activities. Four areas of particular interest that must be addressed in information activities are: (1) early identification, intervention, and prevention; (2) behavior management, conflict resolution, and other approaches to creating more productive and safe educational environments for all students; (3) personnel preparation; and (4) evaluation of community-based (local) program and service effectiveness.

Under this priority, the Secretary proposes to award one 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 center 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 the recommendation of a

review team consisting of three experts selected by the Secretary. The services of the review team, including a two-day visit to the center, are to be performed during the last half of the center's second year and must be included in that year's evaluation required under 34 CFR 75.590. In its budget for the second year, the center must set aside funds to cover the costs of the review team. These funds are estimated to be approximately \$4,000.

In determining whether to continue the center for the fourth and fifth years of the project period, in addition to considering the factors in 34 CFR 75.253(a), the Secretary will consider the following:

(a) The timeliness and effectiveness with which all requirements of the negotiated cooperative agreement have been or are being met by the center; and

(b) The degree to which the center's evaluation methods and information activities demonstrate the potential for advancing significant new knowledge.

The Secretary particularly encourages applicants for this cooperative agreement to incorporate technologically innovative approaches in all aspects of center activities, to improve their efficiency and impact.

The project must budget for two trips annually to Washington, D.C., for: (1) a two-day Research Project Directors' meeting; and (2) another meeting, in the first quarter of each project year, to meet and review project plans and accomplishments with the OSEP project officer and other OSEP and other agency staff to share information on the project.

For Further Information Contact: Tom V. Hanley, U.S. Department of Education, 600 Independence Avenue, S.W., Room 3526, Switzer Building, Washington, D.C. 20202-2641. Telephone: (202) 205-8110. FAX: (202) 205-8105. Internet:

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

Program Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1423

Executive Order 12866

This notice of proposed priorities has been reviewed in accordance with Executive Order 12866. Under the terms of the order the Secretary has assessed the potential costs and benefits of this regulatory action.

The potential costs associated with the notice of proposed priorities are those determined by the Secretary as necessary for administering this program effectively and efficiently.

In assessing the potential costs and benefits—both quantitative and

qualitative—of this notice of proposed priorities, the Secretary has determined that the benefits of the proposed priorities justify the costs.

The Secretary has also determined that this regulatory action does not unduly interfere with State, local, and tribal governments in the exercise of their governmental functions.

To assist the Department in complying with the specific requirements of Executive Order 12866, the Secretary invites comment on whether there may be further opportunities to reduce any potential costs or increase potential benefits resulting from these proposed priorities without impeding the effective and efficient administration of the program.

Summary of Potential Costs and Benefits: There are no identified costs associated with this notice of proposed priorities. Announcement of the priorities will not result in costs to State and local governments, recipients of grant funds, or to children and youth

with disabilities and their families. The benefit from these priorities will be to focus activities and Federal assistance on improving outcomes for children and youth with disabilities.

Intergovernmental Review

Except for the Research in Education of Individuals with Disabilities Program (84.023), all other programs included in this notice are 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 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 3524, 300 C Street SW., Washington, D.C., between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday of each week except Federal holidays.

(Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Numbers: Research in Education of Individuals with Disabilities Program, 84.023; Training Personnel for the Education of Individuals with Disabilities Program, 84.029; and Program for Children and Youth with Serious Emotional Disturbance, 84.237)

Dated: November 8, 1995.

Judith E. Heumann,

Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services.

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