

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

AGENCY: Department of Education.

SUMMARY: The Secretary announces final 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 1997 and subsequent years. The Secretary takes this action to focus Federal assistance on identified needs to improve results for children with disabilities. These final priorities are intended to ensure wide and effective use of program funds.

EFFECTIVE DATE: These priorities take effect on February 20, 1997.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: The address, and telephone number at the Department to contact for information on each final priority is listed under that priority.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: This notice contains six final priorities under three programs authorized by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, as follows: Research in Education of Individuals with Disabilities Program (one priority); Educational Media Research, Production, Distribution, and Training Program (four priorities); and Technology, Educational Media, and Materials for Individuals with Disabilities Program (one priority). The purpose of each program is stated separately under the title of that program.

On October 9, 1996, the Secretary published a notice of proposed priorities for these programs in the Federal Register (61 FR 53032).

These final priorities 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 publication of these 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. Funding of particular projects depends on the availability of funds, and the quality of the applications received. Further, FY 1997 priorities could be affected by enactment of legislation reauthorizing these programs.

Note: This notice of final priorities does not solicit applications. A notice inviting applications under these competitions is

published in a separate notice in this issue of the Federal Register.

Analysis of Comments and Changes

In response to the Secretary's invitation in the notice of proposed priorities, one party submitted comments. An analysis of the comment follows. Technical and other minor changes—as well as suggested changes the Secretary is not legally authorized to make under the applicable statutory authority—are not addressed.

Comment: One commenter suggested that the Initial Career Awards priority should: (1) include individuals who have completed a professional degree, such as physical therapists, but who are not doctorally prepared; and (2) permit researchers to request up to five years of research support.

Discussion: The Department has a basic three-pronged approach to develop the capacity of the special education research community. First, there is the Student-Initiated Research Projects priority (begun in 1974) that targets students at the post-secondary level to encourage students to pursue special education research. Under the Student-Initiated Research Projects priority, awards are made for up to a 12-month period. Second, the Initial Career Awards (ICA) competition (begun in 1990) is intended to bridge the gap between students and established researchers by providing support to individuals who are in the initial phases of their careers to initiate and develop promising lines of research. Under the ICA competition, awards are made for up to three years. Third, the Field-Initiated Research Projects (FIR) competition (begun in 1964) provides support to researchers who may be associated with institutions of higher education, State and local educational agencies, and other public agencies and nonprofit private organizations. Awards under the FIR competition may be for up to 5 years. The Department believes this approach should be maintained because historically the students and beginning researchers have a difficult time competing against established researchers, and the Department believes it is important to encourage and support their participation to expand the special education research capacity into as broad a range as possible. The Department believes that limiting the ICA competition to individuals who are doctorally prepared supports the commitment to increase the capacity of individuals who intend to pursue careers in special education research, rather than individuals who may be capable of conducting research, but who are not making special education

research a career. The Department has limited ICA to three years since these awards are intended as start-up rather than long-term investments.

Changes: None.

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 who work with children with disabilities 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 gives an absolute preference to applications that meet the following priority. The Secretary will fund under this competition only those applications that meet this absolute priority:

Absolute Priority—Initial Career Awards

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 four years after completing a doctoral program and graduating (e.g., for fiscal year 1997 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, DC each year of the project.

For Further Information Contact: For further information on the priority under the Research in Education of Individuals with Disabilities Program contact the U.S. Department of Education, 600 Independence Avenue, SW., room 3529, Switzer Building, Washington, DC 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.

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

Educational Media Research, Production, Distribution, and Training Program

Purpose of Program: To promote the general welfare of individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing and individuals with visual disabilities, and to promote the educational advancement of individuals with disabilities.

Priorities: Under 34 CFR 75.105(c)(3), the Secretary gives an absolute preference to applications that meet any one of the following priorities. The Secretary will fund under these competitions only applications that meet any one of these absolute priorities:

Absolute Priority 1—Closed-Captioned Sports Programs

Background

This priority supports cooperative agreements to continue and to expand closed-captioning of major national sports programs shown on national commercial broadcast or basic cable television networks. Captioning provides a visual representation of the audio portion of the programming and enables individuals who are deaf or

hard of hearing to participate in the shared educational, social, and cultural experiences of national sporting events. Funds provided under this priority may be used to support no more than sixty percent of the captioning costs for the first year of the project, fifty-five percent for the second year, and fifty percent for the third year.

Priority

To be considered for funding under this competition, a project must—

(1) Include criteria for selecting programs for captioning that take into account the preference of consumers for particular sports programs, the diversity of programming available, and the contribution of programs to the general educational, social, and cultural experiences of individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing;

(2) Provide a flexible plan, including back-up systems, to ensure closed-captioning of sports programs without interruption, while accommodating last-minute program substitutions and new programs;

(3) Identify the total number of hours and the projected cost per hour for each of the programs to be captioned;

(4) Identify for each proposed program to be captioned the source of private or other public support and the projected dollar amount of that support;

(5) Identify the methods of captioning to be used for each program—indicating whether captioning is provided in real-time, live display, offline, or reformatted—and the projected cost per hour for each method used;

(6) Demonstrate the willingness of major national commercial broadcast or basic cable networks to permit captioning of their programs; and

(7) Implement procedures for monitoring the extent to which full and accurate captioning is provided and use this information to make refinements in captioning operations.

Absolute Priority 2—Video Description

Background

This priority supports cooperative agreements to provide video description in two areas: (1) Broadcast and cable television programs; and (2) home video. The purpose of this activity will be to describe television programs and videos to make television programming and home videos more accessible to children and adults with visual disabilities. The intent of this priority is to provide access to described television programming and home videos in order to enhance shared educational, social, and cultural experiences for children and adults with visual disabilities.

Priority

To be considered for funding under this priority, a project must—

(1) Include criteria for selecting programs and videos that take into account the preference of consumers for particular topics of interest, the diversity of programs or videos available, and the contribution of these programs or videos to the general educational, social, and cultural experiences of individuals with visual disabilities;

(2) Identify the total number of hours to be described and the projected cost per hour for each program or video to be described;

(3) Identify the source of private or public support, if any, for each program or video to be described, and the projected dollar amount of that support;

(4) Demonstrate the willingness of program or video producers to permit video description and distribution of their program or video; and,

(5) Evaluate the effectiveness of the methods and technologies used in providing this service and the impact on intended populations.

Absolute Priority 3—Educational Video Selection and Captioning

Background

This priority supports one cooperative agreement that would screen, evaluate, obtain, caption, and make available educational videos, including classics and general interest titles, for use by students and other individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing, parents of individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing, and other individuals directly involved in activities promoting the advancement of individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing. This activity includes the preparation of captions on computer diskettes or CD-ROM, as appropriate, and the preparation of lesson guides for educational videos. This priority would ensure that students and other individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing may benefit from the same educational and general interest videos used to enrich the educational experiences of students and other individuals without hearing disabilities.

Priority

To be considered for funding under this priority, the project must—

(1) Develop strategies and procedures to be used in determining curricular needs of students who are deaf or hard of hearing in all types of school settings for captioned videos;

(2) Develop and implement an on-going evaluation program for incorporating the reaction and

suggestions of users into the selection and captioning process;

(3) Develop and implement criteria and procedures for screening, evaluating, and captioning selected videos;

(4) Obtain videos from film and video distributors for screening, evaluation, and possible captioning. Select from among video titles submitted by evaluators those that closely match the curricular needs identified under paragraph (1) of this proposed priority, taking into account the videos most commonly used in school districts across the Nation for all students;

(5) Make arrangements with respective producers and distributors to have selected videos captioned and made available through general distribution mechanisms (such as video sales catalogues), as well as through the captioned film and video loan service authorized under Part F of IDEA and 34 CFR Part 330 (by purchasing up to 100 copies of each captioned title, which must be open-captioned). Closed-captioned masters must be made available to producers and distributors in an effort to promote the use of captioned videos.

(6) For selected titles, prepare captions on computer diskettes or CD-ROM, as appropriate, and check for accuracy. These captions would take into account the age and reading levels of the likely target audience;

(7) For selected educational videos, prepare lesson guides;

(8) Identify, select, and, if necessary, provide training or technical assistance to video evaluators, caption checkers, and captioning service providers; and

(9) Develop and implement quality control guidelines and procedures for checking videocassettes after they are captioned.

Absolute Priority 4—Research on Educational Captioning

Background

This priority supports research on captioning of educational media and materials. Research can be based on the instructional use of captioning or the use of captioning as a language development tool for enhancing the reading and literacy skills of individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing. Media and technologies explored or used by projects funded under this priority may include, but are not limited to: (1) Television—including high-definition television; (2) videos; and (3) other media and multi-media technologies such as interactive videodiscs and CD-ROMs.

Priority

Under this competition, projects must—

(1) Identify specific technological approaches that would be investigated;

(2) Carry out the research within a conceptual framework, based on previous research or theory, that provides a basis for the strategies to be studied, the research design, and target population;

(3) Collect, analyze and report (a) characteristics and outcome data (actual rather than expected results), including the settings, the service providers, and the individuals targeted by the project; and (b) multiple, functional outcome data on the individuals who are the focus of the technological approaches;

(4) Conduct the research in realistic settings such as residential or integrated schools or colleges, or in community settings, as appropriate; and

(5) Conduct the research using methodological procedures that would: (a) Produce unambiguous findings regarding the effects of approaches and effects of the interaction among particular approaches and particular groups of individuals or particular settings; and (b) permit use of the findings in policy analyses.

For Further Information Contact: For further information on the four priorities under the Educational Media Research, Production, Distribution, and Training Program contact the U.S. Department of Education, 600 Independence Avenue SW., room 4627, Switzer Building, Washington, DC 20202-4641. Telephone: (202) 205-8894. FAX: (202) 205-8971. Internet: Jeffrey_Payne@ed.gov.

Individuals who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the TDD number: (202) 205-8169.

Program Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1451, 1452. Technology, Educational Media, and Materials for Individuals With Disabilities Program

Purpose of Program: To support projects and centers for advancing the availability, quality, use, and effectiveness of technology, educational media, and materials in the education of children and youth with disabilities and the provision of related services and early intervention services to infants and toddlers with disabilities.

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—Technology, Educational Media, and Materials Projects That Create Innovative Tools for Students With Disabilities

This priority provides support for development projects that design or adapt technology, assistive technology, educational media, or materials to improve the education of children and youth with disabilities.

Invitational Priority

Within the absolute priority specified in this notice, the Secretary is particularly interested in applications that meet the following invitational priorities. However, under 34 CFR 75.105(c)(1) an application that meets one or more of these invitational priorities does not receive competitive or absolute preference over other applications:

The Secretary is particularly interested in projects that—

(a) *Create Innovative Tools*—by encouraging development of varied and integrated technologies, media, and materials that open up and expand the lives of those with disabilities. This work should enable individuals with disabilities to achieve the outcomes expected of all students, such as independence, productivity and an improved quality of life, that promote equity in opportunity; or

(b) *Foster the Creation of State-of-the-Art Instructional Environments*—both in and out of school. These environments should use technology, educational media, and materials to enable students with disabilities to access knowledge, develop skills and problem-solving strategies, and engage in educational experiences necessary for their success as adults who are fully included in our society.

For Further Information Contact: For further information on the priority under the Technology, Educational Media, and Materials for Individuals with Disabilities Program contact the U.S. Department of Education, 600 Independence Avenue, S.W., Room 4617, Switzer Building, Washington, D.C. 20202-2734. Telephone: (202) 205-9884. FAX: (202) 205-8971. Internet: Robin.Murphy@ed.gov.

Individuals who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the TDD number: (202) 205-8169.

Program Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1461.

Intergovernmental Review

The programs (except for the Research in Education of Individuals with Disabilities Program) 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 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.

(Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Numbers: Research in Education of Individuals with Disabilities Program, 84.023; Media Research, Production, Distribution, and Training Program, 84.026; and Technology, Educational Media, and Materials for Individuals with Disabilities Program, 84.180)

Dated: January 14, 1997.

Katherine D. Seelman,

Acting Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services.

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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services; Notice Inviting Applications for New Awards for Fiscal Year 1997

AGENCY: Department of Education.

SUMMARY: This notice provides closing dates and other information regarding the transmittal of applications for fiscal year 1997 competitions under three programs authorized by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. 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.

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

Research in Education of Individuals With Disabilities Program

[CFDA No. 84.023]

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 who work with children with disabilities in regular education environments—to provide children with disabilities effective instruction and enable these children to learn successfully.

Eligible Applicants: 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; and (b) The regulations for this program in 34 CFR Part 324.

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

Absolute Priority—Initial Career Awards (84.023N)

The priority for Initial Career Awards in the notice of final priority for this program, published elsewhere in this issue of the Federal Register, applies to this competition.

Applications Available: February 10, 1997.

Deadline for Transmittal of Applications: March 28, 1997.

Estimated Number of Awards: 4.

Maximum Award: The Secretary rejects and does not consider an application that proposes a budget exceeding \$75,000 for any single budget period of 12 months. However, because of budgetary considerations contingent upon congressional action, 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, requires applicants to address the selection criteria that will be used by reviewers in evaluating individual proposals. The applicant must limit the Part III—Application Narrative to no more than 30 double-spaced 8½×11" pages (on one side only) with one-inch margins (top, bottom, and sides). This page limitation applies to all material presented in the application narrative—including, for example, any charts, tables, figures, and graphs. The application narrative page limit does not apply to: Part I—the electronically scannable form; Part II—the budget section (including the narrative budget justification); and Part IV—the assurances and certifications. Also, the one-page abstract, resumes, bibliography, or letters of support, while considered part of the application, are not subject to the page limitation. Applicants should note that reviewers are not required to review any information provided in addition to the application information listed above. All sections of text in the application narrative 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 14 characters per inch. If using a nonproportional font or a typewriter, do

not use more than 12 characters to the inch. Double-spacing and font requirements do not apply within charts, tables, figures, and graphs, but the information presented in those formats should be easily readable. The Secretary rejects and does not consider an application that does not adhere to these requirements.

Project Period: Up to 36 months.

For Application Information Contact: For the priority under the Research in Education of Individuals with Disabilities Program contact the U.S. Department of Education, 600 Independence Avenue, S.W., room 3529, Switzer Building, 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.

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

Educational Media Research, Production, Distribution, and Training Program

[CFDA No. 84.026]

Purpose of Program: To promote the general welfare of individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing and individuals with visual impairments, and to promote the educational advancement of individuals with disabilities.

Eligible Applicants: Profit and nonprofit public and private agencies, organizations, and institutions.

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 regulations for this program in 34 CFR Part 332.

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

(Note: If an applicant wishes to apply under more than one of these absolute priorities, the applicant must submit a separate application under each affected priority.)

Absolute Priority 1—Closed-Captioned Sports Programs (84.026A)

The priority for Closed-Captioned Sports Programs in the notice of final priority for this program, published elsewhere in this issue of the Federal Register, applies to this competition.

Applications Available: February 10, 1997.

Deadline for Transmittal of Applications: March 28, 1997.

Deadline for Intergovernmental Review: May 27, 1997.

Estimated Number of Awards: 4.

Maximum Award: The Secretary rejects and does not consider an