

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Notice Inviting Applications for New Awards for Fiscal Year 1998

AGENCY: Department of Education.

ACTION: Notice inviting applications for new awards for fiscal year 1998.

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

This notice provides closing dates and other information regarding the transmittal of applications for a fiscal year 1998 competition under one program authorized by IDEA, as amended. The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) has, in prior years, announced priorities for the support of model demonstration projects under several of the programs authorized by IDEA. This priority consolidates the similar model demonstration priority requirements among the various programs. By consolidating multiple priorities and announcements into one, OSEP endeavors to avoid unnecessary duplication and provide consistent information for all model demonstration competitions. This approach reflects the IDEA amendments of 1997, which consolidated fourteen separate discretionary programs into six, in order to ensure a broader coverage of the full range of children with disabilities, and to provide greater flexibility in the administration of the program. The priority under this program is based on the statutory provisions in IDEA or on previously published priorities for which public comment was sought and received. Only changes authorized by IDEA were made to priorities previously published.

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 priority 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).

This notice supports the National Education Goals by improving understanding of how to enable children with disabilities to reach higher levels of academic achievement.

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

Research and Innovation to Improve Services and Results for Children With Disabilities

[CFDA No. 84.324]

Purpose of Program

To produce, and advance the use of, knowledge to: (1) Improve services provided under IDEA, including the practices of professionals and others involved in providing those services to children with disabilities; and (2) improve educational and early intervention results for infants, toddlers, and children with disabilities.

Eligible Applicants

State and local educational agencies; institutions of higher education; other public agencies; private nonprofit organizations; outlying areas; freely associated States; and Indian tribes or tribal organizations.

Applicable Regulations

(a) The Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR parts 74, 75, 76, 77, 80, 81, 82, 85, and 86; and (b) The selection criteria included in regulations in 34 CFR 324.32.

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

Priority

Under sections 661(e)(2) and 672 of IDEA 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 competition only those applications that meet this absolute priority:

Absolute Priority—Model Demonstration Projects for Children With Disabilities (84.324M)

This priority supports model demonstration projects that develop, implement, evaluate, and disseminate new or improved approaches for providing early intervention, special education and related services to infants, toddlers, and children with disabilities, ages birth through 21. Projects supported under this priority are expected to be major contributors of models or components of models for service providers and for outreach projects funded under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Under the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA), OSEP is developing performance measures for programs authorized by Part D of IDEA. This absolute priority includes measures that may be used to implement the GPRA.

Under this absolute priority, the Secretary expects to fund projects across the full range of age, disability, and service issue categories. In addition, the Secretary intends, under section 661(e)(2) of IDEA, to fund a limited number of projects in each of the focus areas listed below. An applicant that chooses to address one or more of the focus areas listed below should identify in their application the focus area or areas they select on the cover sheet of their application.

Focus Area 1—Early Intervention and Early Childhood

Projects under this focus area support models that identify and address one or more of the changes included in the IDEA Amendments passed in 1997 that may affect the delivery of services for young children with disabilities (ages birth through nine). Examples of changes in IDEA that may affect young children with disabilities and their families include, but are not limited to:

- (1) The implementation and impact of Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSP), Individualized Education Programs, and transition requirements that become effective in July of 1998; and
- (2) The increased access of infants and toddlers to service delivery in natural environments.

Projects under this program are required to evaluate their effectiveness. Where appropriate, the Secretary particularly encourages projects under this focus area to include information related to the following measures—

- (a) Changes in the percentage of families receiving all services identified on the IFSP and reporting that their services are timely and coordinated;
- (b) Changes in the percentage of parents who are satisfied with their child's education; and
- (c) Changes in the number of infants, toddlers, and young children with disabilities, primarily receiving services in natural environments, making the transition at age 3 to inclusive settings, and participating in regular education programs, as a result of the model project.

The Secretary intends to make approximately 3 awards in Focus Area 1.

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Focus Area 2—Instructional Models to Improve Early Reading Results for Children with Learning Disabilities

Children with learning disabilities typically need highly purposeful, strategic, systematic, and carefully designed instruction to learn to read. This focus area supports newly-developed models to improve the early

reading results for children with learning disabilities in kindergarten-third grades. The models must incorporate research-based principles of phonemic awareness, alphabetic understanding and knowledge, the appreciation of meaning, and reflect the following research based principles: create appreciation of the written word; develop awareness of printed language; learn the alphabet; understand the relation of letters and words; understand that language is made of words, syllables, and phonemes; learn letter sounds; sound out new words; identify words in print accurately and easily; know spelling patterns; and learn to read critically.

Projects under this program are required to evaluate their effectiveness. Where appropriate, the Secretary particularly encourages projects under this focus area to include information related to the following measures—

- (a) Multiple measures of student's beginning reading knowledge and skills;
- (b) The extent to which children with learning disabilities access the general education curriculum, including participation in national and State assessments; and
- (c) Descriptions of the instructional models, including basal reading programs, supplemental materials, and instructional approaches.

The Secretary intends to make approximately 3 awards in Focus Area 2.

Focus Area 3—Appropriate Services for Children with Deaf-Blindness

This focus area supports model projects to meet the needs of children with deaf-blindness. Projects may include, for example, related services such as assistive technology, innovative approaches to addressing language and communication, sensory functioning, and orientation and mobility skills for students attending their local schools. Projects may address the heterogeneous nature of the students' needs, ranging from advanced curricula for some students to lifelong support for others. Projects are required to evaluate their effectiveness. Where appropriate, the Secretary particularly encourages projects under this focus area to include information related to the following measures:

- (a) Changes in family satisfaction with the provision of services and the child's education; and
- (b) Changes in the teacher's assessment of the provision of services.

The Secretary intends to make approximately 3 awards in Focus Area 3.

Focus Area 4—Comprehensive Models for Children With or At Risk of Emotional Disturbance

Projects under Focus Area 4 support school and community-based service delivery systems for children with or at risk of emotional disturbance, that implement the targets of the National Agenda for Achieving Better Results for Children and Youth with Serious Emotional Disturbance (U.S. Department of Education, 1994) to: (a) Expand positive learning opportunities and results; (b) Strengthen school and community capacity; (c) Value and address diversity; (d) Collaborate with families; (e) Promote appropriate assessment; (f) Provide ongoing skill development and support; and (g) Create comprehensive and collaborative systems.

The targets and cross-cutting themes of the Agenda were reinforced in IDEA with the emphasis on interagency collaboration, and on early intervention and prevention.

Projects under this program are required to evaluate their effectiveness. Where appropriate, the Secretary particularly encourages projects under this focus area to include information related to the following measures—

- (a) Decreases in the percentage of children who are suspended or expelled; and
- (b) Improvements in identification, early intervention, and prevention of emotional disturbance.

The Secretary intends to make approximately 3 awards in Focus Area 4.

Focus Area 5—Secondary School Services for Children with Disabilities

Among the Amendments to the IDEA passed in 1997 were changes to the requirements in the IEP that take effect on July 1, 1998. The law now requires, beginning at age 14, "a statement of the transition service needs of the child under the applicable components of the child's IEP that focuses on the child's courses of study (such as participation in advanced-placement courses or a vocational education program)" (section 614(d)(1)(A)(vii)(i)). This change focuses attention on how the child's educational program can be planned to help the child succeed in secondary school and make a successful transition to his or her goals for life after secondary school. With the provision of improved services beginning early in secondary school, there is sufficient time to achieve desired post-school results through a carefully planned and integrated program of proper instruction, related services, and community experience.

For example, data from the National Longitudinal Transition Study indicated that successful participation by students with disabilities in vocational education and higher-level academic programs improved outcomes in employment, postsecondary education, independent living, and community participation.

Under Focus Area 5, projects will be supported to develop and demonstrate effective strategies for—

- (a) Incorporating instructional objectives into the IEP that address the needs and preferences of the student, beginning at age 14;
- (b) Specifying a role for the general education teacher in this process;
- (c) To the extent appropriate, employing strategies for accessing the general education curriculum to achieve instructional objectives; and
- (d) Employing strategies for evaluating student progress within instructional settings toward transition-related goals or objectives or both.

Projects under this program are required to evaluate their effectiveness. Where appropriate, the Secretary particularly encourages projects under this focus area to include information related to the following measures—

- (a) Changes in the percentage of children with disabilities participating in core academic subjects (i.e., the subjects required for high school graduation);
- (b) Changes in the percentage of children with disabilities, ages 14 and older, whose IEPs include courses of study for advanced placement or vocational education programs;
- (c) Changes in the percentage of children with disabilities, ages 14 and older, who have IEP statements of student progress toward transition-related goals;
- (d) Changes in student progress on outcomes as measured by State or district-wide assessments of all students;
- (e) Changes in the accumulation of credits toward graduation with a diploma or progress indicators for the awarding of certificates; and
- (f) Changes in attendance and dropout statistics for participants.

The Secretary intends to make approximately 3 awards in Focus Area 5.

Focus Area 6—Two-Year Postsecondary Institutions.

The 1992-93 National Postsecondary Student Aid Survey (NPSAS), reports that 71 percent of students with disabilities attending institutions of higher education are enrolled in two-year institutions. This figure represents an 8 percent increase in two-year

institution enrollment since the 1989–90 academic year. To improve employment outcomes for persons with disabilities, providing exemplary supports, services, and accommodations in two-year community and technical colleges is a critical need. Further, there is a continuing need to strengthen linkages with secondary education, vocational rehabilitation, TRIO programs, four-year colleges and universities, and other State and local agencies, resources, and service-delivery systems.

Projects must address the needs of students with disabilities attending two-year institutions of higher education. For example, projects under this focus may: establish outreach strategies to recruit students from secondary education settings into two-year institutions; develop innovative supports and services to improve academic performance, retention, and program completion rates; improve educational access through assistive technology and distance learning; establish linkages with four-year institutions to facilitate further academic study; and establish collaborations with employers, vocational rehabilitation, community-based organizations, and other relevant agencies and service-delivery systems.

Projects under this program are required to evaluate their effectiveness. Where appropriate, the Secretary particularly encourages projects under this focus area to include information related to the following measure: Changes in the percentage of students with disabilities entering and successfully completing two-year postsecondary education programs, and transferring to four-year institutions or employment as a result of the model project.

The Secretary intends to make approximately 3 awards in Focus Area 6.

Focus Area 7—Local or State Child Find

Projects under this Focus Area support development of local or State Child Find models to identify all eligible children under IDEA, Part C, currently Part H of IDEA. Projects must test and describe the environments and strategies that promote successful child find practices.

Projects under this program are required to evaluate their effectiveness. Where appropriate, the Secretary particularly encourages projects under this focus area to include information related to the following measures—

(a) Changes in the number of children served under Part C, ages birth to 3;

(b) Changes in the number of children referred to the State Child Find system from all sources, public and private;

(c) Changes in the proportion of children served ages birth to 1 year old, as measured relative to the total number of children served under IDEA, Part C within the geographic area served by the project; and

(d) Changes in the collaborative efforts and linkages to other agencies in States that provide services for infants and toddlers at-risk for disabilities.

The Secretary intends to make approximately 3 awards in Focus Area 7.

Focus Area 8—Inclusive Schooling Practices in Urban and Rural School Districts

Projects under this Focus Area demonstrate innovative strategies for implementing inclusive schooling practices, including preschool practices, as components of systemic education reform in urban and rural school districts. For example, projects under this Focus may demonstrate: innovative supports and services as part of systemic education reform to improve academic performance and results for students in inclusive settings; processes and means for general and special education to create a unified system in order to support school reform and the inclusion of students with severe disabilities in inclusive settings; inventive methods for interagency collaboration and service coordination in support of systemic reform for the inclusion of students with disabilities in their community schools; and innovative approaches to the involvement of the community and families in support of systemic reform and implementation of inclusive schooling practices.

Projects under this program are required to evaluate their effectiveness. Where appropriate, the Secretary particularly encourages projects under this focus area to include information related to the following measures:

(a) Changes in the percentage of children with disabilities who participate in the general curriculum most of their day;

(b) Changes in the percentage of children with disabilities in the regular classroom with (appropriate) supports and accommodations and adaptive instructional methods; and

(c) Changes in the percentage of children with disabilities who participate in other school functions as a result of the model project.

The Secretary intends to make approximately 3 awards for this competitive priority.

Requirements for All Demonstration Projects

A model demonstration project must—

(a) Develop and implement the model with specific components or strategies that are based on theory, research, or evaluation data;

(b) Evaluate the model by using multiple measures of results to determine the effectiveness of the model and its components or strategies. With the exception of projects under focus area 7, Local and State Child Fund, all projects must include measures of individual child change and other indicators of the effects of the model (e.g., family outcomes, peer outcomes, teacher outcomes), and cost data associated with implementing the model; and

(c) Produce detailed procedures and materials that would enable others to replicate the model.

Federal financial participation for a project funded under this priority will not exceed 90 percent of the total annual costs of development, operation, and evaluation of the project.

Applicants and resulting projects 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.)

All projects funded under this priority must make positive efforts to employ and advance in employment qualified individuals with disabilities in programs assisted under this Act. (See section 606 of IDEA.)

Projects must budget for two trips annually to Washington, D.C., for: (1) A two-day project directors' meeting; and (2) a meeting to collaborate with the Federal project officer and the other projects funded under this priority, to share information and discuss project implementation issues.

Applications Available: January 23, 1998.

Deadline for Transmittal of Applications: March 13, 1998.

Deadline for Intergovernmental Review: May 13, 1998.

Estimated Number of Awards: 36.

Project Period: Up to 48 months.

Maximum Award: The Secretary rejects and does not consider an application that proposes a budget exceeding \$150,000 (exclusive of any matching funds) 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 Limit: 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 40 double-spaced number of pages, using the following standards: (1) A "page" is 8½" x 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, résumés, 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.

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

Program Authority: Sections 672 and 673 of IDEA.

Dated: November 19, 1997.

Howard Moses,

Acting Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services.

[FR Doc. 98-960 Filed 1-14-98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4000-01-P