

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

RIN 1820 ZA34

National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research

AGENCY: Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Department of Education.

ACTION: Notice of final priorities (NFP) for Community Integration for Individuals with Disabilities.

SUMMARY: The Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services announces final priorities under the Rehabilitation Research and Training Centers (RRTC) Program for the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR). The Assistant Secretary may use one or more of these priorities for competitions in fiscal year (FY) 2004 and later years. We take this action to focus research attention on areas of national need. We intend these priorities to improve community integration outcomes of persons with disabilities who have psychiatric or other mental health conditions.

EFFECTIVE DATE: These final priorities are effective July 9, 2004.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Donna Nangle, U.S. Department of Education, 550 12th Street, SW., room 6046, Potomac Center Plaza, Washington, DC 20202. Telephone: (202) 245-7462 or via Internet: donna.nangle@ed.gov.

If you use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD), you may call the TDD number at (202) 245-7317.

Individuals with disabilities may obtain this document in an alternative format (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, or computer diskette) on request to the contact person listed under **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**Rehabilitation Research and Training Centers**

RRTCs conduct coordinated and integrated advanced programs of research targeted toward the production of new knowledge to improve rehabilitation methodology and service delivery systems, alleviate or stabilize disability conditions, or promote maximum social and economic independence for persons with disabilities. Additional information on the RRTC program can be found at: <http://www.ed.gov/rschstat/research/pubs/res-program.html#RRTC>.

General Requirements of Rehabilitation Research and Training Centers

RRTCs must:

- Carry out coordinated advanced programs of rehabilitation research;
- Provide training, including graduate, pre-service, and in-service training, to help rehabilitation personnel more effectively provide rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities;
- Provide technical assistance to individuals with disabilities, their representatives, providers, and other interested parties;
- Disseminate informational materials to individuals with disabilities, their representatives, providers, and other interested parties; and
- Serve as centers for national excellence in rehabilitation research for individuals with disabilities, their representatives, providers, and other interested parties.

The Department is particularly interested in ensuring that the expenditure of public funds is justified by the execution of intended activities and the advancement of knowledge and, thus, has built this accountability into the selection criteria. Not later than three years after the establishment of any RRTC, NIDRR will conduct one or more reviews of the activities and achievements of the RRTC. In accordance with the provisions of 34 CFR 75.253(a), continued funding depends at all times on satisfactory performance and accomplishment of approved grant objectives.

Analysis of Comments and Changes

We published a notice of proposed priorities (NPP) for this program in the **Federal Register** on March 25, 2004 (69 FR 15308). This Notice of Final Priorities (NFP) contains no significant differences from the NPP. In response to our invitation in the NPP, we received three comments. One commenter expressed general support for the priorities and one expressed support for the focus on children's mental health issues. The third commenter provided specific recommendations. An analysis of the comments follows.

Generally, we do not address technical and other minor changes and suggested changes that we are not authorized to make under the applicable statutory authority.

Comment: One commenter suggested that attention be paid to the effect of disability laws on self-determination, empowerment, and community reintegration for persons with disabilities, particularly in the context of psychiatric disability.

Discussion: Applicants are free to propose research topics that focus on these issues; however, NIDRR does not believe it is necessary to require that an applicant address these specific policy concerns. The peer review process will evaluate the merits of the proposals.

Changes: None.

Note: This notice does *not* solicit applications. In any year in which we choose to use one or more of these priorities, we invite applications through a notice in the **Federal Register**. When inviting applications we designate each priority as absolute, competitive preference, or invitational.

The effect of each type of priority follows:

Absolute priority: Under an absolute priority, we consider only applications that meet the priority (34 CFR 75.105(c)(3)).

Competitive preference priority: Under a competitive preference priority, we give competitive preference to an application by either (1) awarding additional points, depending on how well or the extent to which the application meets the competitive priority (34 CFR 75.105(c)(2)(i)); or (2) selecting an application that meets the competitive priority over an application of comparable merit that does not meet the priority (34 CFR 75.105(c)(2)(ii)).

Invitational priority: Under an invitational priority, we are particularly interested in applications that meet the invitational priority. However, we do not give an application that meets the invitational priority a competitive or absolute preference over other applications (34 CFR 75.105(c)(1)).

Note: NIDRR supports the goals of President Bush's New Freedom Initiative (NFI). The NFI can be accessed on the Internet at the following site: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/newfreedom/>.

These final priorities are in concert with NIDRR's 1999-2003 Long-Range Plan (Plan). The Plan is comprehensive and integrates many issues relating to disability and rehabilitation research topics. While applicants will find many sections throughout the Plan that support potential research to be conducted under these final priorities, a specific reference is included for each priority presented in this notice. The Plan can be accessed on the Internet at the following site: <http://www.ed.gov/rschstat/research/pubs/index.html>.

Through the implementation of the NFI and the Plan, NIDRR seeks to: (1) Improve the quality and utility of disability and rehabilitation research; (2) foster an exchange of expertise, information, and training to facilitate the advancement of knowledge and understanding of the unique needs of

traditionally underserved populations; (3) determine best strategies and programs to improve rehabilitation outcomes for underserved populations; (4) identify research gaps; (5) identify mechanisms of integrating research and practice; and (6) disseminate findings.

Priorities

The Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services announces three priorities for the funding of RRTCs that will focus on rehabilitation related to improving the community integration outcomes of persons with disabilities who have psychiatric or other mental health conditions. Applicants must select and focus research on one of the following priorities: Priority 1—Recovery and Recovery-Oriented Psychiatric Rehabilitation for Persons with Long Term Mental Illness; Priority 2—Developing and Implementing Integrated Systems of Care for Child and Adolescent Mental Health; or Priority 3—Strengthening Family and Youth Participation in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services. Under each of these priorities, the RRTC must:

(1) Contribute substantially to the scientific knowledge-base relevant to its respective subject area,

(2) Research, develop, and evaluate interventions and tools to improve outcomes in its focus area,

(3) Develop, implement, and evaluate a comprehensive plan for training critical stakeholders (e.g., consumers, family members, practitioners, service providers, researchers, and policymakers),

(4) Provide technical assistance, as appropriate, to critical stakeholders (e.g., consumers, family members, practitioners, and service providers) to facilitate utilization of research findings in its respective area of research, and

(5) Develop a systematic plan for widespread dissemination of informational materials based on knowledge gained from the RRTC's research activities, and disseminate the materials to persons with disabilities, their representatives, service providers, and other interested parties.

In addition to the activities proposed by the applicant to carry out these purposes, each RRTC must—

- Conduct a state-of-the-science conference on its respective area of research in the third year of the grant cycle and publish a comprehensive report on the final outcomes of the conference in the fourth year of the grant cycle. This conference must include materials from experts internal and external to the RRTC;

- Coordinate on research projects of mutual interest with relevant NIDRR-funded projects as identified through consultation with the NIDRR project officer;

- Involve individuals with disabilities in planning and implementing its research, training, and dissemination activities, and in evaluating the RRTC;

- Demonstrate in its application how it will address, in whole or in part, the needs of individuals with disabilities from minority backgrounds; and

- Articulate goals, objectives, and expected outcomes for the proposed research activities. It is critical that proposals describe expected public benefits, especially benefits for individuals with disabilities, and propose projects that are designed to demonstrate outcomes that are consistent with the proposed goals. Applicants must include information describing how they will measure outcomes, including the indicators that will represent the end-result, the mechanisms that will be used to evaluate outcomes associated with specific problems or issues, and how the proposed activities will support new intervention approaches and strategies, including a discussion of measures of effectiveness.

An RRTC must focus research on one of the following priorities:

Priority 1—Recovery and Recovery-Oriented Psychiatric Rehabilitation for Persons with Long Term Mental Illness:

The purpose of the priority is to establish an RRTC on Recovery and Recovery-Oriented Psychiatric Rehabilitation for Persons with Long Term Mental Illness, in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Center for Mental Health Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. The RRTC must be outcomes-focused, with the aim of enabling adults with serious mental illness to live, work, learn, and participate fully in their communities. Emphasis must be placed on the development and translation into practice of scientific knowledge that is culturally competent and consumer and family centered. To achieve these goals, the RRTC will conduct research, training, technical assistance, and dissemination activities on individual and environmental factors relevant to recovery and recovery-oriented psychiatric rehabilitation. Relevant topic areas may include, but are not limited to—

- The concept and dimensions of recovery as it relates to people with long-term mental illness;

- Factors that inhibit recovery (e.g., stigma and discrimination, fragmentation of the service delivery system, workforce shortages); or

- Factors that enhance recovery, including model interventions and supports (e.g., culturally competent treatment, supported employment, supported education, and alternative and innovative practices such as exercise, peer supports, and personal assistance services).

The reference for this topic can be found in the Plan, chapter 6, Independent Living and Community Integration.

Priority 2—Developing and Implementing Integrated Systems of Care for Child and Adolescent Mental Health: The purpose of the priority is to establish an RRTC on development and implementation strategies for effective and integrated systems of care for children and adolescents with serious emotional disorders and their families and caregivers, in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Center for Mental Health Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. The RRTC must be outcomes-focused, with the aim of developing and implementing effective and integrated systems of care that provide children and families access to the services and supports they need in order to live, learn, work, and thrive in their communities. To achieve this, the RRTC must conduct research, training, technical assistance, and dissemination activities on relevant areas such as, but not limited to—

- Strategies for maximizing collaboration in planning, accountability, financing, and service delivery within and across service sectors (e.g., mental health, juvenile justice, child welfare, education, substance abuse, primary health).

- Strategies for enhancing the child and adolescent mental health workforce so that it is more diverse and has the training, organizational support, and infrastructure necessary to implement family and community-based individualized service plans.

- Strategies for developing culturally competent policies, practices, and procedures, and incorporating them into the service delivery system.

- Performance measurement and quality improvement procedures designed to help systems of care make adjustments and improvements as needed to achieve their goals.

- Strategies for developing and implementing financial policies that are flexible and encourage home and community-based care provided in

accordance with individualized service plans.

- Strategies for maximizing translation of evidence-based research into systems of care that permit families' self-determination; maximize partnerships between schools, families, and communities; and provide access to effective family and community-based interventions.

The reference for this topic can be found in the Plan, chapter 6, Independent Living and Community Integration.

Priority 3—Strengthening Family and Youth Participation in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services: The purpose of the priority is to establish an RRTC on promoting effective family-centered and community-based practices and supports for children and adolescents with serious emotional disorders and their families and other caregivers, in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Center for Mental Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. The work of the RRTC must be outcomes-focused with the aim of increasing the extent to which families and youth have awareness of and access to supports and services that effectively promote their participation in family, school, work, and community life and roles. To achieve this, the RRTC will conduct research, training, technical assistance, and dissemination activities on relevant topic areas such as, but not limited to—

- Strategies for reducing stigma as a barrier to service delivery for children, families, and other caregivers.
- Strategies for integrating the concept of recovery (as discussed in the field of psychiatric rehabilitation) in service delivery for children and youth.
- Strategies for developing, delivering, and evaluating culturally competent youth and family-driven individualized service plans that are applicable across a variety of settings and service sectors.
- Strategies for maximizing the translation of evidence-based research into effective community-based practices.
- Strategies to support successful transitions across settings.

The reference for this topic can be found in the Plan, chapter 6, Independent Living and Community Integration.

Executive Order 12866

This notice of final priorities has been reviewed in accordance with Executive Order 12866. Under the terms of the order, we have assessed the potential

costs and benefits of this regulatory action.

The potential costs associated with the notice of final priorities are those resulting from statutory requirements and those we have determined as necessary for administering this program effectively and efficiently.

In assessing the potential costs and benefits—both quantitative and qualitative—of this notice of final priorities, we have determined that the benefits of the final priorities justify the costs.

Summary of Potential Costs and Benefits

The potential costs associated with these final priorities are minimal while the benefits are significant. Grantees may anticipate costs associated with completing the application process in terms of staff time, copying, and mailing or delivery. The use of e-Application technology reduces mailing and copying costs significantly.

The benefits of the RRTC Program have been well established over the years in that similar projects have been completed successfully. These final priorities will generate new knowledge through research, dissemination, utilization, training, and technical assistance projects.

The benefit of these final priorities and project requirements will be the establishment of new RRTCs that generate, disseminate, and promote the use of new information to improve options and participation in the community for individuals with disabilities.

Applicable Program Regulations: 34 CFR part 350.

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 the following site: <http://www.ed.gov/news/fedregister>.

To use PDF you must have Adobe Acrobat Reader, which is available free at this site. If you have questions about using PDF, call the U.S. Government Printing Office (GPO), toll free, at 1-888-293-6498; or in the Washington, DC, area at (202) 512-1530.

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.gpoaccess.gov/nara/index.html>.

(Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number: 84.133B, Rehabilitation Research and Training Center Program.)

Program Authority: 29 U.S.C. 762(g) and 764(b)(2).

Dated: June 7, 2004.

Troy R. Justesen,

Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services.

[FR Doc. 04-13190 Filed 6-9-04; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4000-01-P

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services; Overview Information; National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR)—Rehabilitation Research and Training Centers (RRTC) Program—Community Integration for Individuals With Disabilities; Notice Inviting Applications for New Awards for Fiscal Year (FY) 2004

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 84.133B-5.

DATES: *Applications Available:* June 10, 2004.

Deadline for Notice of Intent to Apply: July 9, 2004.

Deadline for Transmittal of Applications: August 3, 2004.

Eligible Applicants: States; public or private agencies, including for-profit agencies; public or private organizations, including for-profit organizations; institutions of higher education; and Indian tribes and tribal organizations.

Estimated Available Funds: \$1,050,000. For funding information regarding individual priorities, see the chart in the Award Information section of this notice.

Estimated Average Size of Awards: See chart.

Maximum Award: We will reject any application that proposes a budget exceeding the amount shown in the chart for a single budget period of 12 months. The Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services may change the maximum amount through a notice published in the **Federal Register**.

Note: The maximum amount includes direct and indirect costs. The maximum allowable indirect cost rate is 15%.

Estimated Number of Awards: See chart.

Project Period: Up to 60 months.

Full Text of Announcement

I. Funding Opportunity Description

Purpose of Program: The purpose of the RRTC program is to improve the