

## DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

### National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR)—Disability and Rehabilitation Research Projects and Centers Program—Rehabilitation Research and Training Centers (RRTCs)—Improved Outcomes for Individuals With Serious Mental Illness and Co-Occurring Conditions

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

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

**ACTION:** Notice of final priority.

**SUMMARY:** The Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services announces a priority for the Disability and Rehabilitation Research Projects and Centers Program administered by NIDRR. Specifically, this notice announces a priority for an RRTC on Improved Outcomes for Individuals With Serious Mental Illness and Co-Occurring Conditions. The Assistant Secretary may use this priority for competitions in fiscal year (FY) 2010 and later years. We take this action to focus research attention on areas of national need. We intend this priority to improve rehabilitation services and outcomes for individuals with disabilities.

**DATES:** *Effective Date:* This priority is effective July 26, 2010.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Lynn Medley, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, SW., Room 5140, Potomac Center Plaza (PCP), Washington, DC 20202. Telephone: (202) 245-7338 or by e-mail: [Lynn.Medley@ed.gov](mailto:Lynn.Medley@ed.gov).

If you use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD), call the Federal Relay Service (FRS), toll free, at 1-800-877-8339.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** This notice of final priority is in concert with NIDRR's Final Long-Range Plan for FY 2005-2009 (Plan). The Plan, which was published in the **Federal Register** on February 15, 2006 (71 FR 8165), can be accessed on the Internet at the following site: <http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/nidrr/policy.html>.

Through the implementation of 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.

*Purpose of Program:* The purpose of the Disability and Rehabilitation Research Projects and Centers Program is to plan and conduct research, demonstration projects, training, and related activities, including international activities, to develop methods, procedures, and rehabilitation technology, that maximize the full inclusion and integration into society, employment, independent living, family support, and economic and social self-sufficiency of individuals with disabilities, especially individuals with the most severe disabilities, and to improve the effectiveness of services authorized under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.

#### RRTC Program

The purpose of the RRTC program is to improve the effectiveness of services authorized under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, through advanced research, training, technical assistance, and dissemination activities in general problem areas, as specified by NIDRR. Such activities are designed to benefit rehabilitation service providers, individuals with disabilities, and the family members or other authorized representatives of individuals with disabilities. In addition, NIDRR intends to require all RRTC applicants to meet the requirements of the *General Rehabilitation Research and Training Centers (RRTC) Requirements* priority that it published in a notice of final priorities in the **Federal Register** on February 1, 2008 (73 FR 6132). Additional information on the RRTC program can be found at: <http://www.ed.gov/rschstat/research/pubs/res-program.html#RRTC>.

#### Statutory and Regulatory Requirements of RRTCs

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 of national excellence in rehabilitation research for individuals with disabilities, their representatives, providers, and other interested parties.

Applicants for RRTC grants must also demonstrate in their applications how they will address, in whole or in part, the needs of individuals with disabilities from minority backgrounds.

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

*Applicable Program Regulations:* 34 CFR part 350.

We published a notice of proposed priority (NPP) for NIDRR's Disability and Rehabilitation Research Projects and Centers Program in the **Federal Register** on April 23, 2010 (75 FR 21282). The NPP included a background statement that described our rationale for the priority proposed in that notice.

There are no differences between the proposed priority and this final priority.

*Public Comment:* In response to our invitation in the NPP, we did not receive any substantive comments on the proposed priority.

#### Final Priority

The Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services announces a priority for a Rehabilitation Research and Training Center (RRTC) on Improved Outcomes for Individuals with Serious Mental Illness and Co-Occurring Conditions. The RRTC must conduct research to adapt, modify, and enhance health and mental health models to improve health and employment outcomes for individuals with serious mental illness (SMI) and co-occurring conditions. The RRTC must conduct research, knowledge translation, training, dissemination, and technical assistance within a framework of self-management and consumer-directed services. Under this priority, the RRTC must contribute to the following outcomes:

(a) Increased knowledge that can be used to enhance the health and well-being of individuals with SMI and co-occurring conditions. The RRTC must contribute to this outcome by:

(1) Conducting research to develop a better understanding of the health, and health care needs of individuals with SMI and co-occurring conditions.

(2) Conducting research to identify or develop and then test interventions that aim to improve health outcomes and promote recovery among individuals living with SMI and co-occurring conditions. These interventions must include individual-level health promotion strategies, such as peer supports and consumer control, as well as system-level strategies for the

delivery of physical and mental health services. These interventions must be based on the findings of research conducted under paragraph (a)(1) of this priority. In carrying out this activity, the grantee must investigate the applicability of strategies that have proven successful with the general population or other subpopulations to determine if they are effective with individuals with SMI and co-occurring conditions.

(b) Improved employment outcomes among individuals with SMI and co-occurring conditions. The RRTC must contribute to this outcome by conducting research that demonstrates how improvements in health service delivery mechanisms, self-management, peer support, and consumer control affect employment outcomes in individuals with SMI and co-occurring conditions. In carrying out this activity the grantee must utilize one or more of the interventions developed under paragraph (a)(2) of this priority.

(c) Increased incorporation of research findings related to SMI, co-occurring conditions, health management, and employment into practice or policy. The RRTC must contribute to this outcome by coordinating with appropriate NIDRR-funded knowledge translation grantees to advance their work in the following areas:

(1) Developing, evaluating, or implementing strategies to increase utilization of research findings related to SMI, co-occurring conditions, health management, and employment.

(2) Conducting training, technical assistance, and dissemination activities to increase utilization of research findings related to SMI, co-occurring conditions, health management, and employment.

#### *Types of Priorities*

When inviting applications for a competition using one or more priorities, we designate the type of each priority as absolute, competitive preference, or invitational through a notice in the **Federal Register**. 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 (1) Awarding additional points, depending on the extent to which the application meets the priority (34 CFR 75.105(c)(2)(i)); or (2) selecting an application that meets the 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 priority. However, we do not give an application that meets the priority a preference over other applications (34 CFR 75.105(c)(1)).

This notice does not preclude us from proposing additional priorities, requirements, definitions, or selection criteria, subject to meeting applicable rulemaking requirements.

**Note:** This notice does *not* solicit applications. In any year in which we choose to use this priority, we invite applications through a notice in the **Federal Register**.

**Executive Order 12866:** This notice 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 final regulatory action.

The potential costs associated with this final regulatory action 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 final regulatory action, we have determined that the benefits of the final priority justify the costs.

#### *Discussion of Costs and Benefits*

The benefits of the Disability and Rehabilitation Research Projects and Centers Program have been well established over the years in that similar projects have been completed successfully. This final priority will generate new knowledge through research and development.

Another benefit of this final priority is that the establishment of a new RRTC will advance research to improve the lives of individuals with disabilities. The new RRTC will disseminate and promote the use of new information that will improve the options for individuals with disabilities to obtain, retain, and advance in employment.

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Dated: June 21, 2010.

**Alexa Posny,**

*Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services.*

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## **DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

### **Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services; Overview Information; National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR)—Disability and Rehabilitation Research Projects and Centers Program—Rehabilitation Research and Training Centers (RRTCs)—Improved Outcomes for Individuals With Serious Mental Illness and Co-Occurring Conditions; Notice Inviting Applications for New Awards for Fiscal Year (FY) 2010**

*Catalog of Federal Domestic*

*Assistance (CFDA) Number:* 84.133B-5.

*Dates:*

*Applications Available:* June 24, 2010.

*Date of Pre-Application Meeting:* July 8, 2010.

*Deadline for Transmittal of Applications:* August 23, 2010.

#### **Full Text of Announcement**

##### **I. Funding Opportunity Description**

**Purpose of Program:** The purpose of the RRTC program is to improve the effectiveness of services authorized under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, through advanced research, training, technical assistance, and dissemination activities in general problem areas, as specified by NIDRR. Such activities are designed to benefit rehabilitation service providers, individuals with disabilities, and the family members or other authorized representatives of individuals with disabilities.

Additional information on the RRTC program can be found at: <http://www.ed.gov/rschstat/research/pubs/res-program.html#RRTC>.