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Dated: February 14, 2005.

John H. Hager,

Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services.

[FR Doc. 05-4104 Filed 3-2-05; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research—Disability and Rehabilitation Research Projects and Centers Program—Rehabilitation Research and Training Centers

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

ACTION: Notice of proposed priority.

SUMMARY: The Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services proposes one funding priority for the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research's (NIDRR) Disability and Rehabilitation Research Projects and Centers Program, Rehabilitation Research and Training Centers (RRTC) program. This priority may be used for competitions in fiscal year (FY) 2005 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: We must receive your comments on or before April 4, 2005.

ADDRESSES: Address all comments about this proposed priority to Donna Nangle, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, SW., room 6030, Potomac Center Plaza, Washington, DC 20204-2700. If you prefer to send your comments through the Internet, use the following address: donna.nangle@ed.gov.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Donna Nangle. Telephone: (202) 245-7462.

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

Individuals with disabilities may obtain this document in an alternative format (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, or computer diskette) on

request to the contact person listed under **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Invitation To Comment

We invite you to submit comments regarding this proposed priority.

We invite you to assist us in complying with the specific requirements of Executive Order 12866 and its overall requirement of reducing regulatory burden that might result from this proposed priority. Please let us know of any further opportunities we should take to reduce potential costs or increase potential benefits while preserving the effective and efficient administration of the program.

During and after the comment period, you may inspect all public comments about this proposed priority in room 6030, 550 12th Street, SW., Potomac Center Plaza, Washington, DC, between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 4 p.m., Eastern time, Monday through Friday of each week except Federal holidays.

Assistance to Individuals With Disabilities in Reviewing the Rulemaking Record

On request, we will supply an appropriate aid, such as a reader or print magnifier, to an individual with a disability who needs assistance to review the comments or other documents in the public rulemaking record for this proposed priority. If you want to schedule an appointment for this type of aid, please contact the person listed under **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**.

We will announce the final priority in a notice in the **Federal Register**. We will determine the final priority after considering responses to this notice and other information available to the Department. This notice does not preclude us from proposing or funding additional priorities, subject to meeting applicable rulemaking requirements.

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

The proposed priority is in concert with NIDRR's 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 the proposed priority, a specific reference is included for the 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.

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;
- Identify anticipated outcomes of RRTC activities that are linked to stated RRTC objectives;
- 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.

Priority

Background

In April 2002, President George W. Bush announced the creation of the New Freedom Commission on Mental Health. He charged the Commission with studying the mental health care system in the United States and making recommendations that would enable adults with serious mental illness and children with serious emotional disturbance to live, work, learn, and participate fully in their communities. The Commission Report, "Achieving the Promise: Transforming Mental Health Care in America" (July 2003), along with reports from the Surgeon General and numerous other public and private entities, offer consensus on a number of findings addressed in the proposed priority. These include the importance of enhancing self-determination; consumer-driven, community-based interventions; collaboration within the

mental health service system; workforce development; and culturally competent care.

One promising area noted in "Achieving the Promise: Transforming Mental Health Care in America" is consumer-operated services. Such services are common: A national survey of the mental health self-help sector conducted by the U.S. Substance Abuse Mental Health Administration's Center for Mental Health Services shows that mental health support groups and self-help organizations run by and for mental health consumers and their families now outnumber traditional mental health organizations by almost two to one (Goldstrom, I., Campbell, J., Rogers, J., Lambert, D., Blacklow, B., Manderscheid, R., and Henderson, M. (Forthcoming). National estimates of mental health mutual support groups, self-help organizations, and consumer-operated services. Administration and Policy in Mental Health).

The Surgeon General's Report on Mental Health estimated that about one in five Americans experience a mental disorder in a given year (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1999. *Mental Health: Report of the Surgeon General*. Rockville, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Mental Health Services, National Institutes of Health, National Institute of Mental Health. Available on-line: <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/mentalhealth/home.html>). Serious mental illness can interfere with the ability to work, attend school, or manage day-to-day activities. For example, labor force participation and employment rates are substantially lower for people with mental health disabilities than for people with other disabilities or with no disability (Jans, L., Stoddard, S. & Kraus, L., 2004. *Chartbook on Mental Health and Disability in the United States*. An InfoUse Report. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research). As cited in the final report of the President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health, the "annual indirect cost of mental illnesses is estimated to be \$79 billion." (New Freedom Commission on Mental Health, 2003. *Achieving the Promise: Transforming Mental Health Care in America*. Final Report. DHHS Pub. No. SMA-03-3832. Rockville, MD.)

NIDRR, in collaboration with the U.S. Substance Abuse Mental Health Service Administration, proposes a priority for an RRTC on promoting access to effective consumer-centered and

community-based practices and supports for adults with serious mental illness. This priority focuses on outcomes rather than activities. The overall outcome for this proposed priority mirrors the President's charge: To work towards enabling adults with serious mental illness to live, work, learn, and participate fully in their communities.

Proposed Priority

The Assistant Secretary proposes a priority for one RRTC which must focus on promoting access to effective consumer-centered and community-based practices and supports for adults with serious mental illness.

The RRTC must—

(1) Identify or develop and evaluate models, methods, and measures for improving the quality of mental health outcomes through transformation of the service delivery system in a manner that reflects and embodies consumer choice. These models, methods, and measures may focus on, but are not limited to self-determination, consumer-centered services, consumer choice, and coordination across service systems. All of these efforts must be culturally competent and appropriate for targeted populations;

(2) Identify or develop and then evaluate strategies for translating evidence-based mental health research findings and best practices into effective interventions, including the development of tools and supports for providers of mental health or other adjunctive services that reflect consumer choice; and

(3) Identify or develop and evaluate interventions, such as peer support services, that help to improve workforce capacity and choice for adults with serious mental illness.

In addition to the activities proposed by the applicant, the 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; and

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

Executive Order 12866

This notice of proposed priority 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 proposed priority 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 proposed priority, we have determined that the benefits of this proposed priority justify the costs.

Summary of potential costs and benefits: The potential costs associated with this proposed priority 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. This proposed priority will generate new knowledge and technologies through research, development, dissemination, utilization, and technical assistance projects.

Another benefit of this proposed priority also will be the establishment of a new RRTC that supports the President's NFI and will improve the lives of persons with disabilities. This new RRTC will generate, disseminate, and promote the use of new information that will improve the options for individuals with disabilities to perform regular activities in the community.

Applicable Program Regulations: 34 CFR part 350.

Electronic Access to This Document

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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.

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

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

Dated: February 25, 2005.

John H. Hager,

Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services.

[FR Doc. 05–4105 Filed 3–2–05; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services; Overview Information; State Personnel Development Grants Program; Notice Inviting Applications for New Awards for Fiscal Year (FY) 2004 (To Be Awarded in FY 2005)

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 84.323A.

Dates: Applications Available: March 4, 2005. Deadline for Transmittal of Applications: April 15, 2005. Deadline for Intergovernmental Review: June 14, 2005.

Eligible Applicants: A State educational agency (SEA) of one of the 50 States, the District of Columbia, or the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico or an outlying area (United States Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands). Current State Program Improvement Grant grantees with multi-year awards who wish to apply for a grant under the State Personnel Development Program may do so, subject to section 651(e) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which prohibits a State requesting to receive a continuation award under the State Improvement Grant Program, as in effect prior to December 3, 2004, from receiving any other award under this program authority for that fiscal year.

Estimated Available Funds: \$8,350,992.

Estimated Range of Awards: In the case of the 50 States, the District of Columbia, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, award amounts will be not less than \$500,000, nor more than \$4,000,000. In the case of an outlying

area, awards will be not less than \$80,000.

Note: Consistent with 34 CFR 75.104(b) of the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR), we will reject, without consideration or evaluation, any application that proposes a project funding level for any fiscal year that exceeds the stated maximum award amount for that fiscal year.

We will set the amount of each grant after considering—

- (1) The amount of funds available for making the grants;
- (2) The relative population of the State or outlying area;
- (3) The types of activities proposed by the State or outlying area;
- (4) The alignment of proposed activities with section 612(a)(14) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA);
- (5) The alignment of proposed activities with State plans and applications submitted under sections 1111 and 2112, respectively, of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (ESEA); and
- (6) The use, as appropriate, of scientifically based research activities.

Estimated Average Size of Awards: \$927,888, excluding outlying areas.

Estimated Number of Awards: 9.

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

Project Period: Not less than one year and not more than five years.

Full Text of Announcement

I. Funding Opportunity Description

Purpose of Program: The purpose of this program, authorized under the IDEA, is to assist SEAs in reforming and improving their systems for personnel preparation and professional development in early intervention, educational, and transition services in order to improve results for children with disabilities.

Priorities: In accordance with 34 CFR 75.105(b)(2)(v) these priorities are from allowable activities specified in the statute. (See sections 651–655 of the IDEA).

Absolute Priority: For FY 2005 this priority is an absolute priority. Under section 653 of the IDEA and 34 CFR 75.105(c)(3), we consider only applications that meet this priority.

Background of Priority: States have been successful in improving educational and transition services and results for children with disabilities in response to growing demands imposed by factors, such as demographics, social policies, and labor and economic markets. In order for States to address