

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services; Proposed Priorities****AGENCY:** Department of Education.**ACTION:** Notice of proposed priorities.

SUMMARY: The Secretary proposes priorities for eight 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 1996 and subsequent years. The Secretary takes this action to focus Federal assistance on identified needs to improve outcomes for children with disabilities. The proposed priorities are intended to ensure wide and effective use of program funds.

DATES: Comments must be received on or before January 8, 1996 for the Research in Education of Individuals with Disabilities Program; February 5, 1996 for the Special Studies Program; and December 7, 1996 for all remaining programs.

ADDRESSES: All comments concerning proposed priorities under the Research in Education of Individuals with Disabilities Program, the Special Studies Program, and Program for Children and Youth with Serious Emotional Disturbance, should be addressed to: Linda Glidewell, U.S. Department of Education, 600 Independence Avenue, S.W., Room 3524, Switzer Building, Washington, D.C. 20202-2641. All comments concerning proposed priorities under the Early Education Program for Children with Disabilities; the Educational Media Research, Production, Distribution, and Training Program; the Postsecondary Education Program for Individuals with Disabilities; the Program for Children with Severe Disabilities; and the Secondary and Transitional Services for Youth with Disabilities Program should be addressed to Joseph Clair, U.S. Department of Education, 600 Independence Avenue, S.W., Room 4622, Switzer Building, Washington D.C. 20202-2644.

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

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: This notice contains thirteen proposed priorities under eight programs authorized by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, as follows:

Research in Education of Individuals with Disabilities Program (one proposed priority); Early Education Program for Children with Disabilities (four proposed priorities); Educational Media Research, Production, Distribution, and Training Program (one proposed priority); Postsecondary Education Program for Individuals with Disabilities (one proposed priority); Program for Children with Severe Disabilities (one proposed priority); Secondary and Transitional Services for Youth with Disabilities Program (two proposed priorities); Special Studies Program (two proposed priorities); and Program for Children and Youth with Serious Emotional Disturbance (one proposed priority). The purpose of each program is stated separately under the title of that program.

These proposed priorities would 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 Secretary will announce the final priorities in a notice in the Federal Register. The final priorities will be determined by responses to this notice, available funds, and other considerations of the Department. Funding of particular projects depends on the availability of funds, the content of the final priorities, and the quality of the applications received. Further, priorities could be affected by enactment of legislation reauthorizing these programs. The publication of these proposed 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.

Note: This notice of proposed priorities does not solicit applications. Notices inviting applications under these competitions will be published in the Federal Register concurrent with or following publication of the notices of final priorities.

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 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 proposes to give an absolute preference to applications that meet the following priority. The Secretary proposes to fund under these competitions only applications that meet this absolute priority:

Proposed Absolute Priority—Initial Career Awards

Background: There is need to enable individuals in the initial phases of their careers to initiate and develop promising lines of research that would improve early intervention services for infants and toddlers, and special education for children and youth with disabilities. Support for research activities among individuals in the initial phases of their careers is intended to develop the capacity of the special education research community. This priority would address the additional need to provide support for a broad range of field-initiated research projects—focusing on the special education and related services for children and youth with disabilities and early intervention for infants and toddlers—consistent with the purpose of the program as described in 34 CFR 324.1.

Priority: The Secretary proposes to establish 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 three years after completing a doctoral program and graduating (e.g., for fiscal year 1996 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 effectively pursue 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 must include in the budget funds to attend the two-day Research Project Directors' meeting to be held in Washington, D.C. each year of the project.

For Further Information Contact:

Doris Andres, U.S. Department of Education, 600 Independence Avenue, S.W., Room 3526, Switzer Building, Washington, D.C. 20202-2641.

Telephone: (202) 205-8125. FAX: (202) 205-8105. Internet:

Doris_Andres@ed.gov. Individuals who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the TDD number: (202) 205-8953.

Early Education Program for Children With Disabilities Program

Purpose of Program: To support activities that are designed (a) to address the special needs of children with disabilities, birth through age eight, and their families; and (b) to assist State and local entities in expanding and improving programs and services for these children and their families.

Priorities

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

Proposed Absolute Priority 1—National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center

Background: This proposed priority would support a national early childhood technical assistance center that will provide technical assistance to all States, outlying areas and the Bureau of Indian Affairs, in order to (1) assist

each entity in implementing comprehensive and quality early intervention services under Part H for children ages birth through two and their families, and educational and related services for young children with disabilities (ages three through five) including minority children and children with limited English proficiency, and (2) help entities respond to needs identified through their self-assessment and State monitoring activities. The center will also provide technical assistance to early childhood projects funded by the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) under the IDEA. Utilizing State technical assistance systems, national organizations and their State divisions, other technical assistance and clearinghouse projects, the center will provide mechanisms to link professionals who are involved in producing new knowledge and products with program administrators and service providers.

Priority: The Secretary proposes to establish an absolute priority to support a national early childhood technical assistance center. The center must:

(a) Provide technical assistance to all States, outlying areas, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs as they implement early intervention services under Part H, and educational and related services for young children with disabilities. At a minimum, the center must (1) conduct annual needs assessments; (2) develop technical assistance agreements for each entity; (3) provide technical assistance, training, and on-going consultation based on the technical assistance agreements; (4) conduct annual meetings for Part H clients and for Section 619 clients; and (5) assist States in coordinating early intervention services and preschool services with IDEA school-age programs.

(b) Provide technical assistance to all early childhood projects funded by OSEP. At a minimum, the center must (1) conduct annual needs assessments; (2) develop technical assistance agreements for each project; (3) provide technical assistance, training, and on-going consultation based on the technical assistance agreements; and (4) conduct an annual meeting for directors of early childhood discretionary projects funded by OSEP;

(c) Establish an advisory group of persons with complementary expertise in the content and provision of technical assistance, e.g., State issues, project issues, family issues, parenting, evaluation, and needs of underrepresented children and families; to advise the center on its technical assistance activities;

(d) Link entities and OSEP-funded early childhood projects with national experts knowledgeable about best practice for young children with disabilities and their families, including children and families from cultural and linguistic minority groups;

(e) Develop informational exchanges between the center and State technical assistance systems; and among States with technical assistance systems;

(f) Develop an information system, current in content and technological accessibility, that contains data and materials to meet the technical assistance needs of the center's clients;

(g) Conduct at least two national forums that identify persistent problems, propose solutions, and respond to emerging issues and trends in early intervention and preschool;

(h) Facilitate exchanges of information among federal and State programs regarding funding and policy practices and implications for young children with disabilities and their families;

(i) Provide logistical and technical support to the Federal Interagency Coordinating Council;

(j) Compile and disseminate information about (1) early childhood projects funded by OSERS, (2) effective practices for early intervention and preschool programs, (3) major State activities related to implementing Section 619—Preschool Grants Program, (4) major State activities related to implementing the Infant and Toddler Program—Part H program, and (5) successful linkage activities and practices;

(k) Coordinate with other technical assistance networks to sponsor a forum that addresses model practices for national and State technical assistance provision;

(l) Evaluate the impact of the center's technical assistance system and its components relative to (1) the assessed needs of States, jurisdictions and early childhood projects; and (2) the national needs of young children with disabilities and their families.

The Secretary anticipates funding one cooperative agreement for a project period of up to 60 months subject to the requirements of 34 CFR 75.253(a) for continuation awards. In determining whether to continue the center for the fourth and fifth years of the project period, in addition to applying the requirements of 34 CFR 75.253(a), the Secretary will consider the recommendation of a review team consisting of three experts selected by the Secretary. The services of the review team, including a two-day visit to the center, are to be performed during the

last half of the center's second year and must be included in that year's evaluation required under 34 CFR 75.590. Funds to cover the costs of the review team must be included in the center's budget for year two. These costs are estimated to be approximately \$4000.

The Secretary particularly encourages applicants for this cooperative agreement to incorporate technologically innovative approaches in all aspects of center activities, to improve their efficiency and impact.

Selection Criteria for Evaluating Applications. The Secretary proposes to use the following criteria to evaluate an application under the national early childhood technical assistance center competition. The maximum score for all the criteria is 100 points.

- (a) *Plan of operation.* (10 points)
- (1) The Secretary reviews each application to determine the quality of the plan of operation for the project.
 - (2) The Secretary considers—
 - (i) The extent to which the management plan will ensure proper and efficient administration of the project;
 - (ii) The quality of the activities proposed to accomplish the goals and objectives;
 - (iii) The adequacy of proposed timelines for accomplishing those activities; and
 - (iv) Effectiveness in the ways in which the applicant plans to use the resources and personnel to accomplish the goals and objectives.
 - (3) How the applicant will ensure that project participants who are otherwise eligible to participate are selected without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability.
- (b) *Quality of key personnel.* (15 points)
- (1) The Secretary reviews each application to determine the qualifications of the key personnel the applicant plans to use.
 - (2) The Assistant Secretary considers—
 - (i) The qualifications of the project director and project coordinator (if one is used);
 - (ii) The qualifications of each of the other key project personnel;
 - (iii) The time that each person referred to in paragraphs (b)(2)(i) and (ii) of this section will commit to the project; and
 - (iv) How the applicant will ensure that personnel are selected for employment without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability.
 - (3) To determine personnel qualifications under (b)(2)(i) and (ii) of this section, the Secretary considers—

(i) Experience and training in fields related to the objectives of the project; and

(ii) Any other qualifications that pertain to the quality of the project.

(c) *Budget and cost effectiveness.* (5 points)

(1) The Secretary reviews each application to determine if the project has an adequate budget.

(2) The Secretary considers the extent to which—

(i) The budget for the project is adequate to support project activities; and

(ii) Costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives of the project.

(d) *Evaluation plan.* (10 points)

(1) The Secretary reviews each application to determine the quality of the evaluation plan for the project.

(2) The Secretary considers—

(i) The extent to which the applicant's methods of evaluation are appropriate to the project; and

(ii) To the degree possible, the extent to which the applicant's methods of evaluation are objective and produce data that are quantifiable.

(e) *Adequacy of resources.* (10 points)

(1) The Secretary reviews each application to determine adequacy of resources allocated to the project.

(2) The Secretary considers the adequacy of the facilities and the equipment and supplies that the applicant plans to use.

(f) *Evidence of need.* (10 points)

(1) The Secretary reviews each application to assess whether the need for the proposed technical assistance has been adequately justified.

(2) The Secretary determines the extent to which the application—

(i) Describes the technical assistance needs to be addressed by the project;

(ii) Describes how the applicant identified those needs;

(iii) Describes how those needs will be met by the project; and

(iv) Describes the benefits to be gained by meeting those needs.

(g) *Project design.* (40 points)

(1) The Secretary reviews each application to evaluate the quality of the proposed technical assistance project design.

(2) The Secretary determines the extent to which—

(i) The technical assistance objectives are designed to meet the identified needs and are clearly defined, measurable, and achievable;

(ii) The content of the proposed technical assistance is appropriate for all clients.

(3) The Secretary determines the extent to which each application provides for—

(i) Use of current research findings and information on model practices in providing the technical assistance.

(ii) Methods for linking all clients in need of technical assistance;

(iii) Innovative procedures for disseminating information and imparting skills to all clients; and

(iv) Innovative procedures for collaborating and coordinating with other entities that are involved with broader technical assistance efforts.

For Further Information Contact:
 Peggy Cvach, U.S. Department of Education, 600 Independence Avenue, S.W., Room 4609, Switzer Building, Washington, D.C. 20202-2641. Telephone: (202) 205-9807. FAX: (202) 205-8971. Internet: Peggy_Cvach@ed.gov. Individuals who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the TDD number: (202) 205-8169.

Proposed Absolute Priority 2—Model Demonstration Projects for Young Children With Disabilities

Background: This priority supports projects that develop, implement, evaluate, and disseminate new or improved approaches for serving young children with disabilities (infants, toddlers, and children ages birth through eight) and their families, including minority children and children with limited English proficiency. 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.

The Secretary anticipates funding projects for a project period of up to 60 months. Projects supported for an initial three-year period may be eligible for an additional two years of funding to field test the viability of their models at other site locations. In determining whether to continue funding for the fourth and fifth years of the project period, the Secretary, in addition to applying the requirements of 34 CFR 75.253(a), considers the recommendation of a review team consisting of three experts selected by the Secretary. The services of the review team, including a two-day site visit, are to be performed during a project's third year and may be included in that year's annual evaluation. The three-plus-two-year funding period is expected to determine whether models yielding positive results at an original site can be successfully replicated at other locations.

Priority: A model demonstration project must—

(a) Develop and implement programs that address a service problem or issue in the most natural or least restrictive environment;

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

(c) Produce detailed procedures and materials that enable others to replicate the model as implemented at the original site; and,

(d) Evaluate the model at the original model development site and—if approved for funding beyond the initial three years of the project period—at other sites to determine whether the model can be adopted by other sites and yield similar positive results. In its evaluation, a project must use multiple outcome measures to determine the effectiveness of the model and its components or strategies, including measures of multiple, functional child and family outcomes, other indicators of the effects of the model, and cost data associated with implementing the model.

In determining whether to continue a project for the fourth and fifth years of the project period, in addition to considering factors in 34 CFR 75.253(a), the Secretary considers the following:

(a) The degree to which the model developed by the project is, or would be by the end of year three, viable and replicable by other agencies, and provides state-of-the-art interventions.

(b) The extent to which dissemination of the model would meet a significant or unique service need in other geographic locations.

(c) Compelling, quantifiable evidence of the effectiveness of the model as implemented at the original development site.

(d) Availability of funding for the model from sources other than discretionary grants under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act to support the operation of the model at the original development site during years four and five.

(e) Evidence of the commitment of other agencies not affiliated with the original project to adopt its model and participate in evaluation of the model during years four and five of the project period.

(f) The extent to which the project has sound plans for aiding in replication and for evaluating its model at replication sites during years four and five of the project period.

A project that applies for funding for the fourth and fifth years must set aside in its budget for the third year funds to cover costs associated with the services to be performed by the review team

appointed by the Secretary to evaluate the project in the third year. These funds are estimated to be approximately \$4,000.

For Further Information Contact: Patricia Wright, U.S. Department of Education, 600 Independence Avenue, S.W., Room 4623, Switzer Building, Washington, D.C. 20202-2641. Telephone: (202) 205-9377. Fax: (202) 205-8971. Internet: Patricia_Wright@ed.gov. Individuals who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the TDD number: (202) 205-8169.

Proposed Absolute Priority 3—Outreach Projects for Young Children With Disabilities

Background: This priority supports projects that assist educational and other agencies in implementing proven models, components of models, and other exemplary practices, to improve services for young children with disabilities (infants, toddlers, and children ages birth through eight) and their families, including minority children and children with limited English proficiency. To accomplish this goal, State agencies and local service agencies need information about and assistance in accessing the range of available, successful practices, curricula, and products.

The models, components of models, or exemplary practices selected for outreach need not have been developed through the Early Childhood Education Program under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), or by the applicant.

To increase the impact of outreach activities, projects are encouraged to select sites in multiple States. The Department of Education funds an Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center under IDEA to assist outreach projects in addressing the needs of States. This Center will help projects match their resources to identified States' needs for years two and three. Therefore, the plan of operation for projects planning to conduct outreach activities in multiple States should include plans concerning specific sites and activities for the initial year only.

Priority: An outreach project must—

(a) Disseminate information about and assist in replicating proven models, components of models, or exemplary practices that provide or improve services for young children with disabilities and their families in the most natural or least restrictive environment;

(b) Coordinate its dissemination and replication activities with the lead agency for Part H of the IDEA for early

intervention services or the State educational agency for special education, as well as with technical assistance, information, and personnel development networks within the State;

(c) Involve families in the design, implementation, and evaluation of project activities;

(d) Ensure interagency coordination if multiple agencies are involved in the provision of services;

(e) Ensure that the model, components of models, or exemplary practices are consistent with Part B and Part H of IDEA, are state-of-the-art, match the needs of the proposed sites, and have evaluation data supporting their effectiveness;

(f) Include public awareness, product development and dissemination, training, and technical assistance activities, and written plans for site development;

(g) Describe criteria for selecting implementation sites and, for potential users, the expected costs, needed personnel, staff training, equipment, and sequence of implementation activities; and

(h) Evaluate the outreach activities to determine their effectiveness. The evaluation must include the types and numbers of sites where outreach activities are conducted, number of persons trained, types of follow-up activities, number of children and families served at the site where models were adopted or adapted, child progress and family satisfaction, and changes in the model or practice made by sites.

For Further Information Contact: Lee Coleman, U.S. Department of Education, 600 Independence Avenue, S.W., Room 4615, Switzer Building, Washington, D.C. 20202-2641. Telephone: (202) 205-8166. FAX: (202) 205-8971. Internet: Lee_Coleman@ed.gov. Individuals who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the TDD number: (202) 205-8169.

Proposed Absolute Priority 4—Early Childhood Research Institutes

Background: The purpose of this priority is to support three early childhood research institutes, each of which will carry out research, development, evaluation and dissemination activities to improve early intervention and preschool services for children with disabilities and their families. One award will be made in each of the following three areas:

(1) Early Childhood Research Institute on Culturally and Linguistically Competent Services. This institute's program of research will focus on creating a resource bank of validated,

culturally and linguistically appropriate materials and documented strategies (including child find and child instructional materials, personnel training manuals, family services materials) that can be used by service providers to work effectively with infants, toddlers, and preschool age children with disabilities and their families who have special needs because of their cultural or linguistic backgrounds. In addition to developing and field testing new materials and documented strategies to fill gaps, the institute will collect and catalog already existing materials, conduct reviews and field testing of selected materials, and broadly disseminate information about how to access materials collected or created by the institute.

(2) Early Childhood Research Institute on Increasing Learning Opportunities for Children through Families. The purpose of this institute is to identify, develop and evaluate strategies that will increase the number and intensity of planned learning activities that parents, and other caregivers can implement in structured and unstructured settings for infants, toddlers, and preschool age children with disabilities to prepare these children to enter school ready to learn, including those who are members of racial minority groups and individuals with limited English proficiency. These strategies (such as incidental teaching, use of educational games and toys, technology applications, evening and weekend activities) must be designed in a way that will complement services that are specified on Individualized Family Service Plans and Individual Education Programs and promote further skill acquisition, generalization and child growth and development. The institute will conduct a series of investigations to determine the effects and costs of various strategies that are developed in each of the following areas of child development: cognitive development, communication development, physical development, and social and emotional development. The institute's dissemination efforts will include the preparation of manuals for professionals, parents, and other caregivers that describe (1) procedures to determine additional learning opportunities for individual children, and (2) how to implement the strategies in a variety of settings and in a manner that complements other early intervention and preschool services.

(3) Early Childhood Research Institute on Program Performance Measures. The purpose of this institute is to develop, evaluate, and disseminate a program performance measurement system for

early intervention, preschool, and primary-grade programs serving children with disabilities (birth through eight years) and their families. The performance measurement system will consist of child and family outcomes for different child ages within the early childhood age range as well as indicators and sources of data corresponding to each outcome. These child and family outcomes, indicators, and sources of data must be useful for tracking the progress of a broad range of children and families with different disabilities and characteristics and for measuring the impact and effectiveness of early childhood programs. For the performance measurement system to be useful at federal, State, and local levels, it will include child and family outcomes of a general nature (i.e., outcomes appropriate for tracking the progress of all young children with disabilities and their families, including those who are members of cultural, linguistic, or racial minority groups) as well as sets of more specific outcomes. Each of the sets of more specific outcomes should correspond with a particular subgroup of children and families (e.g., children who are visually-impaired; families with incomes below the poverty level) that have characteristics unique to that subgroup, and that are appropriately separated from other subgroups for more precise and relevant measurement purposes.

In carrying out the developmental work, which will include consensus development activities based on input from a variety of professionals and parents, the institute will build upon other relevant efforts, including the work of the National Center on Educational Outcomes and the National Goals Panel on School Readiness. Once the initial developmental work is complete, the institute will conduct research activities to determine the feasibility, usefulness and appropriateness of the outcomes, indicators, and data sources in a variety of programs serving young children with disabilities and their families. The results of the research will include a system for measuring child and family attainment of outcomes, indicators of outcomes that are written in operational terms, and instruments and other data sources for each outcome. The measurement system must be designed in a manner that captures partial attainment or progress toward attainment of each outcome, and a method of using the results of the measurement system for program improvement.

Priority: Each institute considered for funding under this priority must—

(a) Conduct a program of research and development that addresses one of the issues identified above;

(b) Identify specific strategies and procedures that will be investigated;

(c) Carry out the research within a conceptual framework, based on previous research or theory, that provides a basis for the strategies and procedures to be studied, the research methods and instrumentation that will be used, and the specific target populations and settings that will be studied;

(d) Collect, analyze, and report a variety of data, including (1) information on the settings, the service providers, the children and families targeted by the institute (e.g., age, disability, level of functioning and membership in a special population, if appropriate), (2) outcome data from multiple measures for the children and families who are the focus of the strategies and procedures; and (3) implementation data from the service providers, administrators and others involved in the research;

(e) Conduct the research with a broad range of children with disabilities and their families who are receiving early intervention and preschool services in typical service delivery settings;

(f) Conduct the research using methodological procedures that are designed to produce unambiguous findings regarding the effects of the strategies and procedures, as well as any findings on interaction effects between particular strategies and particular characteristics of participants or settings. These findings will be obtained through appropriate sample selection and adequate sample size to permit use of the findings in policy analyses;

(g) Design research activities that lead to improved services for children with disabilities and their families;

(h) Develop and field test products that can be used for training and technical assistance activities with policy makers, administrators, school board members, parents, and service providers that are likely to facilitate the implementation of the institute's findings and products in a variety of early intervention and preschool settings;

(i) Coordinate the research activities with other relevant efforts sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, including other research institutes, technical assistance entities, and information clearinghouses;

(j) Provide training and research opportunities for a limited number of graduate students.

The Secretary anticipates funding three cooperative agreements with a

project period of up to 60 months subject to the requirements of 34 CFR 75.253(a) for continuation awards. In determining whether to continue an institute for the fourth and fifth years of the project period, the Secretary, in addition to applying the requirements of 34 CFR 75.253(a), will consider the following:

(1) The recommendation of a review team consisting of three experts selected by the Secretary. The services of the review team, including a two-day visit to the Institute, are to be performed during the last half of the Institute's second year and must be included in that year's evaluation required under 34 CFR 75.590. In its budget for the second year, the Institute must set aside funds to cover the costs of the review team. These funds are estimated to be approximately \$4,000; (2) the timeliness and effectiveness with which all requirements of the negotiated cooperative agreement have been or are being met by the Institute; and (3) the degree to which the Institute's research designs and methodological procedures demonstrate the potential for producing significant new knowledge and products.

For Further Information Contact: Patricia Wright, U.S. Department of Education, 600 Independence Avenue, SW., Room 4623, Switzer Building, Washington, DC 20202-2641. Telephone: (202) 205-9377. FAX: (202) 205-8971. Internet: Patricia_Wright@ed.gov. Individuals who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the TDD number: (202) 205-8169.

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 309.

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

Program Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1423.

Educational Media Research, Production, Distribution, and Training Program

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

Priority

Under 34 CFR 75.105(c)(3) the Secretary proposes to give an absolute preference to applications that meet the following priority. The Secretary proposes to fund under this competition

only applications that meet this absolute priority:

Proposed Absolute Priority—Closed-Captioned Television Programs

Background: This priority supports cooperative agreements to provide closed-captioning of television programs in a variety of areas: (1) National news and public information programs; (2) movies, mini-series, special programs, and other programs broadcast during prime-time; (3) children's programs; and (4) syndicated television programs.

National News and Public Information. This activity will continue and expand closed-captioned national news, public information programs, and emergency programming, so that persons with hearing impairments can have access to up-to-date national morning, evening, and weekend news, as well as information concerning current events and other significant public information. In making awards the Secretary will consider the extent to which programs on each major national commercial and public broadcast network continue to be captioned. For news and public information programs that have previously been captioned, funds provided under this category may be used to support no more than one-half of the captioning costs. Funds provided under this category also may be used to support the captioning of emergency programming.

Movies, Mini-Series, and Special Programs. This activity will continue and expand the closed-captioning of movies, mini-series, and special programs available on major national broadcast networks or basic cable networks. In making awards the Secretary will consider the extent to which prime-time movies and other programs on each major national commercial broadcast network continue to be closed-captioned. Funds provided under this category may be used to support no more than one-half of the captioning costs for movies, mini-series, and special programs.

Children's Programs. This activity will provide closed-captioning of children's programs shown on national commercial and public broadcast networks, as well as syndicated and basic cable programs shown nationally, so that children who are deaf or hard of hearing will have access to popular children's programs. In making awards the Secretary will consider the extent to which children's programs on each major national commercial and public broadcast network, syndicated, and basic cable children's programs continue to be captioned.

Syndicated Television Programming. This activity will provide closed-captioning of syndicated television programs, thereby making a variety of programs available at different times, depending on local distribution. Syndicated programming includes both evergreen programming (popular previously-broadcast programs or series), and new programs distributed for showing on individual stations. In making awards, the Secretary considers the anticipated shelf-life and the range of distribution of the captioned programs possible without further costs to the project beyond the initial captioning costs, as well as the extent to which programs currently captioned may continue to be captioned.

Priority: Under this competition, the Secretary intends to make one or more awards in each of the four areas of activity identified above. Each application may address only one of the areas of activity.

Projects must—

(a) Include procedures and criteria for selecting programs for captioning that take into account the preference of consumers for particular programs, the diversity of programming available, and the contribution of programs to the general educational, and cultural experiences of individuals with hearing impairments;

(b) Provide a flexible plan to assure closed-captioning of television programs without interruption, while accommodating last-minute program substitutions and new programs;

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

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

(e) 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;

(f) For national news and public information, provide and maintain back-up systems that will ensure successful, timely captioning service, despite national or regional emergency situations;

(g) Demonstrate the willingness of each major network or providers of syndicated programs included in the project to permit captioning of their programs;

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

(i) Identify the anticipated shelf-life, and the range of distribution of the programs captioned without further costs to the project beyond the initial captioning costs. (Syndicated programs only).

For Further Information Contact:

Ernest Hairston, U.S. Department of Education, 600 Independence Avenue, S.W., Room 4629, Switzer Building, Washington, D.C. 20202-2641.

Telephone: (202) 205-9172. FAX: (202) 205-8971. Internet:

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

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 parts 330, 331, and 332.

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

Program Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1451, 1452.

Postsecondary Education Programs for Individuals With Disabilities Program

Purpose of Program: To provide assistance for the development, operation, and dissemination of specially designed model programs of postsecondary, vocational, technical, continuing, or adult education for individuals with disabilities.

Priority

Under 34 CFR 75.105(c)(3) the Secretary proposes to give an absolute preference to applications that meet the following priority. The Secretary proposes to fund under this competition only applications that meet this absolute priority:

Proposed Absolute Priority—Model Demonstration Projects to Improve the Delivery and Outcomes of Postsecondary Education for Individuals With Disabilities

Background: This priority supports projects that develop, implement, evaluate, and disseminate new or improved approaches for serving the needs of students with disabilities in postsecondary settings. Projects supported under this priority are expected to be major contributors of models or components of models for service providers in the field and for outreach projects funded under the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act.

Although institutions of higher education have implemented measures to accommodate students with

disabilities since the 1970's, longitudinal and follow-up studies of students exiting from secondary schools consistently show that proportionately fewer students with disabilities receive any type of postsecondary education than students without disabilities. Further, those students with disabilities who do attend postsecondary institutions are significantly less likely to complete their studies or to be employed following their postsecondary experience. To change these outcomes, a number of specific barriers must be addressed, including the following:

Improving student potential for successful postsecondary experiences. Some students with disabilities and their families may be unaware of the range of available postsecondary opportunities. Other students may be aware of these options but may not be prepared to benefit from postsecondary education. To increase the number of students with disabilities entering and successfully completing postsecondary education, there is a need to develop strategies for outreach activities to inform secondary special education teachers and counselors in secondary schools about the range of postsecondary opportunities available and how to work with students and families to understand and access these opportunities. Further, there is a need to develop or adapt programs such as Upward Bound and Talent Search that assist potential candidates to access postsecondary education.

Accommodating diverse learning styles in a range of academic settings. As the number and range of students with disabilities entering postsecondary institutions increase, there will be a continuing need for an institution's administration to accommodate or modify instructional strategies and classroom environments to promote improved participation and performance for these students. Thus, postsecondary institutions will have to work with individual faculty members and staff to implement the accommodations needed by particular students. This is likely to require institutional strategies (1) to understand state-of-the-art practice in accommodating the full range of students with disabilities in traditional and emerging learning environments, and (2) to provide training on an on-going, as well as student-specific, basis to faculty or staff.

Transferring of student accommodations to the employment setting. Students with disabilities who require classroom accommodations and adaptations to improve academic performance may require similar types

of accommodations or adaptations on the job. In addition, specific jobs or professions may need additional accommodations or adaptations to successfully employ particular students with disabilities. Thus, there is a need to develop strategies for helping students, placement specialists, and employers determine the accommodations or adaptations that would be required for professions or employment settings of interest to the student, and for transferring or arranging for those accommodations. This is likely to require cooperative efforts among representatives of the services responsible for successful vocational placements for people with disabilities.

These collaborative efforts must include extensive involvement of representatives from an institution's program that provides support services to students with disabilities, the institution's career placement office, the State vocational rehabilitation (VR) agency (for VR-sponsored students), and business and industry.

Priority: A model demonstration project must—

(a) Develop and implement programs that address at least one of the three specific service issues described in the background of this proposed priority;

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

(c) Produce detailed procedures and materials that enable others to replicate the model as implemented in the original site; and,

(d) Evaluate the model by using multiple outcome measures to determine the effectiveness of the model and its components or strategies, including measures of multiple, functional student outcomes, other indicators of the effects of the model, and cost data associated with implementing the model.

For Further Information Contact:

Michael Ward, U.S. Department of Education, 600 Independence Avenue, S.W., Room 4624, Switzer B Building, Washington, D.C. 20202-2641.

Telephone: (202) 205-8163. FAX: (202) 205-8971. Internet:

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

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 338.

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

Program Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1424a.

Program for Children With Severe Disabilities

Purpose of Program: To provide Federal assistance to address the special needs of infants, toddlers, children, and youth with severe disabilities—including children with deaf-blindness—and their families.

Priority

Under 34 CFR 75.105(c)(3) the Secretary proposes to give an absolute preference to applications that meet the following priority. The Secretary proposes to fund under this competition only applications that meet this absolute priority:

Proposed Absolute Priority—Outreach Projects: Serving Children With Severe Disabilities in General Education and Community Settings

Background: This priority supports projects that assist educational and other agencies in implementing proven models, components of models, and exemplary practices to improve services for children and youth with severe disabilities and their families. State and local education agencies are engaged in systemic educational reform efforts emphasizing development of teaching and learning standards, student assessment, mobilizing community and parental support, technology, and school to work initiatives for all students. To support these efforts, State agencies and local service agencies need information on successful practices, curricula, and products that have proven effective in including students with severe disabilities in social and academic settings and activities.

The models, components of models, or exemplary practices selected for outreach activities need not have been developed through the Program for Children with Severe Disabilities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, or by the applicant.

The practices to be implemented during the outreach activities may focus on, but are not limited to, transition from school to adult life, behavior management, coordination of services, or strategies that facilitate the inclusion of children with severe disabilities into their neighborhood schools and local communities. To increase their visibility and to enhance the impact of outreach activities, projects are encouraged to establish adoption sites in multiple States.

Priority: An outreach project must—

(a) Disseminate information about and assist in replicating proven models, components of models, or exemplary practices that provide or improve services for children with severe disabilities and their families in general education and community settings;

(b) Coordinate its dissemination and replication activities with the lead agency for Part H of the IDEA for early intervention services or the State educational agency for special education, as well as technical assistance, information, and personnel development networks within the State;

(c) Involve children, as appropriate, and their families in the design, implementation, and evaluation of project activities;

(d) Ensure interagency coordination if multiple agencies are involved in the provision of services;

(e) Ensure that the models, components of models, or exemplary practices are consistent with Parts B and H of the IDEA, are state-of-the-art, match the needs of the proposed sites, and have evaluation data supporting their effectiveness;

(f) Include public awareness, product development and dissemination, training, and technical assistance activities, and written plans for site development;

(g) Describe criteria for selecting implementation sites and, for potential users, the expected costs, needed personnel, staff training, equipment, and the sequence of implementation activities;

(h) Evaluate the outreach activities to determine their effectiveness. The evaluation must include the types and numbers of sites where outreach activities are conducted, number of persons trained, types of follow-up activities, number of children and families served at the site where models or practices were adopted or adapted, child progress and family satisfaction, and changes in the model or practices made by sites.

For Further Information Contact: Anne Smith, U.S. Department of Education, 600 Independence Avenue, S.W., Room 4621, Switzer Building, Washington, D.C. 20202-2641. Telephone: (202) 205-8888. Fax: (202) 205-8971. Internet:

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

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 315.

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

Program Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1424.

Secondary Education and Transitional Services for Youth With Disabilities Program

Purpose of Program: To (1) assist youth with disabilities in the transition from secondary school to postsecondary environments, such as competitive or supported employment, and (2) ensure that secondary special education and transitional services result in competitive or supported employment for youth with disabilities.

Priorities

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

Proposed Absolute Priority 1—Outreach Projects for Services for Youth With Disabilities

Background: This priority supports projects that assist educational and other agencies in implementing proven models, components of models, or other exemplary practices to improve secondary education and transitional services for youth with disabilities in areas such as continuing education, self-determination, vocational education and training, supported competitive employment, leisure and recreation, and independent living.

Data from the National Longitudinal Transition Study (NLTS) indicated that secondary education students with disabilities averaged 70% of their time in regular education settings. The study also suggests that 38% of students with disabilities drop out before their completion, with repeated course failure a strong predictor of dropping out. Many of these students were in regular education classes without the help of academic support services (e.g., tutors, study skills and test-taking preparation classes, learning labs). The provision of these services and enrollment in vocational training courses had significant "holding power" for those students who had the potential for dropping out. The NLTS also found that youth who belonged to school or community groups did better in school, were less likely to drop out, and experienced a higher probability of entering postsecondary education. Thus, there is a critical need for secondary schools to accommodate or modify

instructional strategies and classroom environments to promote improved participation and performance of students with disabilities.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that a statement of needed transition services be included in the individualized education program (IEP) for each student beginning no later than age 16, and at a younger age, if determined appropriate, and that the services be updated on an annual basis (20 U.S.C. 1401(A)(20)(D)). To effectively meet this requirement, State agencies and local service agencies need information on successful practices, curricula, and products.

The models, components of models, or exemplary practices selected for outreach need not have been developed through the Secondary and Transitional Services Program under the IDEA, or by the applicant. To increase the impact of outreach activities, projects are encouraged to select sites in multiple regions or States.

Priority: An outreach project must—

(a) Disseminate information about and assist in replicating proven models, components of models, or exemplary practices that provide or improve secondary and transitional services for students with disabilities in community-based settings or the least restrictive environment, as appropriate;

(b) Coordinate its dissemination and replication activities with relevant State and local educational agencies, consumer organizations, administrative entities established in the service delivery area under the Job Training Partnership Act, and, if appropriate, other systems for transitional services for youth with disabilities as well as with technical assistance, information, and personnel development networks within the State;

(c) Involve students and adults with disabilities in the design, implementation, and evaluation of project activities;

(d) Ensure coordination with schools, vocational rehabilitation agencies, adult service providers, and potential employers, if appropriate;

(e) Ensure that the model, components of models, or exemplary practices are consistent with Part B of the IDEA, are state-of-the-art, match the needs of proposed sites, and have evaluation data supporting their effectiveness;

(f) Include public awareness, product development and dissemination, training, and technical assistance activities, and written plans for site development;

(g) Describe criteria for selecting implementation sites and, for potential users, the expected costs, needed personnel, staff training, equipment, and the sequence of implementation activities;

(h) Evaluate the outreach activities to determine their effectiveness. The evaluation must include the types and numbers of sites where outreach activities are conducted, number of persons trained, types of follow-up activities, number of youth and families served at the site where models were adopted or adapted, youth progress and satisfaction, and changes in the model or practice made by sites.

For Further Information Contact: Michael Ward, U.S. Department of Education, 600 Independence Avenue, S.W., Room 4624, Switzer Building, Washington, D.C. 20202-2641. Telephone: (202) 205-8163. Fax: (202) 205-8971. Internet: Michael_Ward@ed.gov. Individuals who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the TDD number: (202) 205-8169.

Proposed Absolute Priority 2—Model Demonstration Projects to Improve the Delivery and Outcomes of Secondary Education Services for Students With Disabilities

Background: This priority supports projects that develop, implement, evaluate, and disseminate new or improved approaches for serving the needs of students with disabilities in secondary school settings. Projects must coordinate their activities with State and local partnerships developed under the School-to-Work Opportunities Act to prepare all students for high-skill, high-wage jobs or further education and training. In particular, the school-based learning activities must be tied to occupational skills standards and challenging academic standards. Projects supported under this priority are expected to be major contributors of models or components of models for secondary school services providers in the field and for outreach projects funded under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Data from the National Longitudinal Transition Study (NLTS) indicated that secondary education students with disabilities averaged 70% of their time in regular education settings. The study also suggests that 38% of students with disabilities drop out before their completion, with repeated course failure a strong predictor of dropping out. Many of these students were in regular education classes without the help of academic support services (e.g., tutors, study skills and test-taking preparation

classes, learning labs). The provision of these services and enrollment in vocational training courses had significant "holding power" for those students who had the potential for dropping out. The NLTS also found that youth who belonged to school or community groups did better in school, were less likely to drop out, and experienced a higher probability of entering postsecondary education. Thus, there is a critical need for secondary schools to accommodate or modify instructional strategies and classroom environments to promote improved participation and performance for students with disabilities.

In order to meet the needs of students with disabilities in secondary settings, a number of service issues need to be addressed: (a) Providing counseling, tutoring, assistive technology and other support strategies to prevent course failure among students with disabilities; (b) restructuring academic and/or vocational course offerings (e.g., content, instructional procedures, and sequencing) to accommodate students with disabilities with diverse learning needs and styles; (c) revising academic courses in a manner that directly complements skills taught in vocational education programs and in other courses; and (d) developing extracurricular activities for students with disabilities that promote the retention and generalization of academic and vocational skills in a variety of settings.

In order to implement the accommodations needed by particular students, it is important that strategies be developed in coordination with individual teachers and related services personnel. These linkages are likely to result from institutional strategies that (1) are based on an understanding of state-of-the-art practice in accommodating the full range of students with disabilities in traditional and emerging learning environments, and (2) provide training on an on-going, as well as student-specific, basis to teachers and other personnel.

Priority: A model demonstration project must—

(1) Develop and implement programs that address at least one of the specific service issues described in the background of this proposed priority;

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

(3) Produce detailed procedures and materials that would enable others to replicate the model as implemented in the original site; and,

(4) Evaluate the model by using multiple outcome measures to determine the effectiveness of the model and its components or strategies, including measures of multiple, functional student and family outcomes, other indicators of the effects of the model, and cost data associated with implementing the model.

For Further Information Contact: Michael Ward, U.S. Department of Education, 600 Independence Avenue, S.W., Room 4624, Switzer Building, Washington, D.C. 20202-2641. Telephone: (202) 205-8163. Fax: (202) 205-8971. Internet: Michael_Ward@ed.gov. Individuals who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the TDD number: (202) 205-8169.

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 326.

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

Program Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1425.

Special Studies Program

Purpose of Program: To support studies to evaluate the impact of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), including efforts to provide a free appropriate public education to children and youth with disabilities, and early intervention services to infants and toddlers with disabilities.

Priorities

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

Proposed Absolute Priority 1—Testing the Use of An Instrument to Measure Student Progress

Background: The Office of Special Education Programs funded the development and testing of the PASS (Performance Assessment for Self-Sufficiency) system to respond to the needs of local, State, and federal agencies for information on the post-school services required by students with disabilities as they make the transition to adult service delivery systems. The field test of PASS indicated that the system also had great potential for use in measuring student outcomes. The findings from the field test on the utility of the PASS system

indicate that PASS may be useful for a wide range of purposes including:

- Developing a systematic method of estimating the post-school needs of exiting students with disabilities.
- Developing a transition planning tool that would be used to develop and monitor individualized education/transition plans (IEPs/ITPs), to track student progress, and to be used for follow-up purposes after exiting school.
- Documenting outcomes, identifying programs and curriculum needs, and for evaluating programs.
- Improving interagency coordination and teamwork.
- Providing a common database for use at local, State and national levels.

The results of the field test lead the Office of Special Education Programs to conclude that deployment of the PASS at this time is premature and an investigation of the feasibility and utility of the PASS system as a tool for transition planning, and for measuring student outcomes, is in order.

The PASS System. The PASS system has two main components: The PASS Instrument, and the PASS Expert System. The PASS instrument obtains teachers' assessments of four major competency areas related to functional performance skills demanded by adult life. First, teachers complete the PASS instrument which provides ratings of students for a broad array of functional performance indicators in four general domains: Daily Living, Personal and Social Development, Employment, and Educational Performance. The specific skills and behaviors targeted on the PASS instrument are ones that are typically required for adult life and that have service implications. For example, very low performance ratings on several specific indicators—such as “moves self about in immediate neighborhood (E.G., walking, bicycling), “uses public transportation if available (e.g., bus, taxi), “uses maps and bus schedules when appropriate”, etc.—suggest differing needs for assistance with mobility and transportation aspects of daily living. The PASS also provides information about the student's training, education, and employment, as well as major problem behaviors. No special assessment is required: teachers complete the PASS based on what they already know about the student from direct observation or input from colleagues who work with the student. The instrument was developed in collaboration with well-known transition experts, and involved considerable interaction with State and local administrators and practitioners in both special education and adult

services. It has been produced in a machine-scanable format.

The second component is the PASS expert system which is a micro-computer-based program that converts the PASS data into projected service estimates for individuals and groups based on data from the PASS questionnaire. The prototype expert system, which incorporates the knowledge and expertise of more than 30 special education and adult services practitioners across the country, was field tested in over 100 school districts in 10 States to test the feasibility of administrative procedures for collecting PASS data from schools and to guide refinement of the PASS instrument and expert system prototype.

The American Institutes for Research (AIR) developed the rudimentary prototype PASS system and tested its administrative feasibility. AIR developed the following deliverables, which are available from the Office of Special Education Programs: Evaluation of the Utility of the PASS System; Technical Documentation for the PASS Expert System; Technical Manual for the PASS Instrument; USER Guide to the PASS Expert System; Report on the Administrative Feasibility of the PASS System; Technical Documentation for the PASS Expert System; Recommendations and Rationales for Revisions to the PASS Instrument and Instructions.

Priority: The Assistant Secretary proposes to establish an absolute priority for a project, through a cooperative agreement, to assist the Office of Special Education Programs in evaluating the feasibility and utility of the PASS system: (a) As a tool for transition planning, across all disability categories and levels of severity; and (b) as a tool for measuring student outcomes, across all disability categories and levels of severity. Additionally, the project will validate the expert system's decision rules.

The project must:

- (a) Develop the conceptual framework for the study;
- (b) Establish a Stakeholder group that will advise the project on the study design;
- (c) Develop data collection methods and instruments;
- (d) Develop methods of data analysis;
- (e) Carryout a field test;
- (f) Provide guidance and support to States participating in the field test;
- (g) Analyze the results of the field test and prepare a final report on the findings of the study; and
- (h) Budget for two trips to Washington, D.C. each year. One trip to meet with the OSEP Project Officer and

one trip to attend the annual Project Director's Meeting.

For Further Information Contact: Susan Sanchez, U.S. Department of Education, 600 Independence Avenue, S.W., Room 3524, Switzer Building, Washington, D.C. 20202-2641. Telephone: (202) 205-8998. FAX: (202) 205-8105. Internet: Susan_Sanchez@ed.gov. Individuals who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the TDD number: (202) 205-2641.

Proposed Absolute Priority 2—State-Federal Administrative Information Exchange

Background: Information for decisionmaking and policy development to ensure appropriate and effective education and early intervention for all infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities is critically important. State and Federal decision-makers responsible for the implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) must have access to valid statistics, research findings, and policy options, as well as current information on trends in providing of special education and related services.

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) within the U.S. Department of Education has the responsibility for Federal administration of the IDEA. State Education Agencies (SEAs), or other designated State agencies under Part H of the Act, oversee the administration of the Act at State and local levels. This project will facilitate the access and analysis of administrative and policy information to and from the States and help other jurisdictions, and to ensure the flow of communication between the Federal Government and administrators of IDEA at State and local levels.

Priority: The Secretary proposes to establish a priority to facilitate communication between the U.S. Department of Education and State and local administrators of IDEA, and to synthesize national program information that will improve the management, administration, delivery and effectiveness of programs and services provided under the Act. The cooperative agreement funded under this priority will provide a mechanism and resources to the Department for analyzing policies and emerging issues that are of significant national concern. The project must—

(1) Identify national and State program improvement information that is needed to obtain better results in education and providing early intervention services for infants,

toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities;

(2) Organize, synthesize, interpret, integrate, and facilitate dissemination of information needed for program improvement;

(3) Analyze emerging policy or program issues regarding the administration of special education, early intervention, and related services at the Federal, State and local levels;

(4) Facilitate the use of information at Federal, State and local levels for program improvement for infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities.

The project must organize, coordinate, and maintain a data base of laws, policies, and regulations that govern special education within the States and other jurisdictions; communicate, on a regular basis, with State educational agencies to identify emerging policy issues; obtain, analyze and synthesize information relative to the emerging issues; and convene experts, special education administrators, and others to review, plan, and provide leadership in recommending multi-level actions that respond to the emerging issues. The project must communicate regularly with the Office of Special Education Programs to ensure the continuing flow and development of information that may be required at the Federal level to facilitate the improvement and efficiency of administration of the IDEA by the U.S. Department of Education.

Upon request of the OSEP project officer, the project should meet with other funded projects of OSEP for purposes of cross-project collaboration and information exchange. The project must also budget for two trips annually to Washington, D.C. for: (1) A two-day Research Project Directors' meeting; and (2) another meeting to meet and collaborate with the OSEP project officer.

For Further Information Contact: Jane C. Williams, U.S. Department of Education, 600 Independence Avenue, S.W., Room 3529, Switzer Building, Washington, D.C. 20202-2641. Telephone: (202) 205-9039. FAX: (202) 205-8105. Internet: Jane_Williams@ed.gov. Individuals who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the TDD number: (202) 205-8953.

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 327.

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

Program Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1418.

Program for Children and Youth With Serious Emotional Disturbance

Purpose of Program: To support projects designed to improve special education and related services to children and youth with serious emotional disturbance. Types of projects that may be supported under the program include, but are not limited to, research, development, and demonstration projects. Funds may also be used to develop and demonstrate approaches to assist and prevent children with emotional and behavioral problems from developing serious emotional disturbance.

Priority

Under 34 CFR 75.105(c)(3) the Secretary proposes to give an absolute preference to applications that meet the following priority. The Secretary proposes to fund under these competitions only applications that meet this absolute priority:

Proposed Absolute Priority—Developing Effective Secondary School-Based Practices for Youth With Serious Emotional Disturbance

Background: Recent nationwide research on secondary school experiences and post-school outcomes for students with disabilities finds that youth with serious emotional disturbance (SED) are at particularly high risk for school failure and for poor post-school outcomes. While the majority of secondary age students with SED attend regular high schools, most of these students receive special education and related services outside the regular classroom for a substantial part, or all, of their school day. SED students attending regular secondary schools tend, as a group: to display erratic school attendance patterns; to achieve low levels of academic success despite generally normal-and-above ability levels; to be minimally involved in the social milieu of their schools; and to drop out of school at alarming rates. Fifty percent drop out of school, most by the tenth grade.

Poor adjustment and behavioral concerns are common during and beyond high school among these students. Data from the National Longitudinal Transition Study show that only one in ten students with serious emotional disturbance have behavior management plans. They tend to be under- or un-employed, are rarely involved in post-secondary education, and are at high risk for engaging in activities and behaviors outside the bounds of the law.

While fairly substantial recent and current efforts are focusing on

improving results for younger students with SED, little attention is being directed toward their secondary-age counterparts. This priority is intended to address this critical need.

Priority: The Secretary proposes to establish an absolute priority for projects to develop, implement, test the efficacy of, and disseminate practices for improving academic, vocational, personal, social, and behavioral results for students with SED in regular high schools, including consideration of the most appropriate and least restrictive placements.

Under this priority, projects must—

(1) Develop practices with sound conceptual bases that are designed to improve critical academic, vocational, personal, social, and behavioral outcomes for SED students;

(2) Apply rigorous research standards in testing the efficacy of practices developed;

(3) Develop products that include clear, comprehensive descriptions of tested practices, test site contexts, and target student characteristics, and disseminate these products to appropriate research institutes, clearinghouses, and technical assistance providers.

A project must budget for two trips annually to Washington, D.C. for: (1) A two-day Research Project Directors' meeting; and (2) another meeting to meet and collaborate with the OSEP project officer and with other relevant OSEP funded projects.

For Further Information Contact:
Helen Thornton, U.S. Department of Education, 600 Independence Avenue, S.W., Room 3520, Switzer Building, Washington, D.C. 20202-2641. Telephone: (202) 205-5910. Fax: (202) 205-8105. Internet:

Helen_Thornton@ed.gov. Individuals who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the TDD number: (202) 205-8953.

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 328.

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

Program Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1423.

Intergovernmental Review

Except for the Research in Education of Individuals with Disabilities Program (84.023) and the Special Studies Program (84.159), all other programs 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 financial 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.

Invitation to Comment

Interested persons are invited to submit comments and recommendations regarding these proposed priorities.

All comments submitted in response to this notice will be available for public inspection, during and after the comment period, in Room 3524, 300 C Street, S.W., Washington, D.C., between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday of each week except Federal holidays.

Dated: September 14, 1995.

Howard R. Moses,

Acting Assistant for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services.

(Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Numbers: Research in Education of Individuals with Disabilities Program, 84.023; Early Education Program for Children with Disabilities, 84.024; Media Research, Production, Distribution, and Training Program, 84.026; Postsecondary Education Program for Individuals with Disabilities Program, 84.078; Program for Children with Severe Disabilities, 84.086; Secondary Education and Transitional Services Program for Youth with Disabilities, 84.158; Special Studies Program, 84.159; and Program for Children and Youth with Serious Emotional Disturbance, 84.237)

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