

While great strides have been made since the passage of the ADA in 1990, much more remains to be done. In general, people with disabilities continue to live outside the mainstream of American life. They remain unnecessarily institutionalized. They have lower rates of participation in community life. They have lower educational levels and higher unemployment levels and poverty rates.

The 2000 National Organization on Disability/Lou Harris Survey on Community Integration found that 40 percent of people with severe disabilities are not at all involved in their communities; this is almost double the percentage as people without disabilities.

The NFI expands research on and access to assistive technology (AT); promotes education, homeownership, and employment opportunities for people with disabilities; and emphasizes swift implementation of the ADA and the U.S. Supreme Court's *Olmstead* decision. The *Olmstead* decision holds that title II of the ADA prohibits unjustified isolation or segregation of qualified individuals with disabilities through institutionalization. The President further issued Executive Order 13217, "Community-Based Alternatives for Individuals with Disabilities," which requires Federal agencies to implement *Olmstead*.

In order to further the goals of CI and IL, NIDRR intends to fund up to four community integration-related RRTCs.

Applicants must select from the following topic areas: (a) Community Integration for Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities; (b) Promoting Healthy Aging and Community Inclusion Among Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities; (c) Positive Behavioral Support in Community Settings; (d) Policies Affecting Families of Children with Disabilities; (e) Community Integration for People with Psychiatric Disabilities; and (f) Community-Based Substance Abuse Rehabilitation for Individuals with Disabilities.

For purposes of this priority, the definition of "Intellectual Disability" follows that of the American Association of Mental Retardation (AAMR). A person with an intellectual disability, as defined by the AAMR, must have:

- (1) A significantly sub-average general IQ. The AAMR defines this as an IQ of 70 or less on a standard measure of intelligence;
- (2) Limitations in two or more of the following adaptive skills: communication, self-care, home living,

social skills, community use, self-direction, health and safety, functional academics, and leisure and work; and

(3) Acquired their condition before 18 years old.

For purposes of this priority, the definition of "Developmental Disability" follows the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act. The term developmental disability means a severe, chronic disability of an individual that:

- (1) Is attributable to a mental or physical impairment or combination of mental and physical impairments;
- (2) Is manifested before the individual attains age 22;
- (3) Is likely to continue indefinitely;
- (4) Results in substantial functional limitations in 3 or more of the following areas of major life activity: self-care; receptive and expressive language; learning; mobility; self-direction; capacity for independent living; economic self-sufficiency; and
- (5) Reflects the individual's need for a combination and sequence of special, interdisciplinary, or generic services, individualized supports, or other forms of assistance that are of lifelong or extended duration and are individually planned and coordinated.

Letters of Intent

Due to the open nature of this competition, NIDRR is requiring all potential applicants to submit a Letter of Intent (LOI). Each LOI must be limited to a maximum of four pages and must include the following information: (1) The title of the proposed RRTC, the name of the host institution, the name of the Principal Investigator (PI), and the names of partner institutions and entities; (2) a brief statement of the vision, goals, and objectives of the proposed RRTC and a description of its research and development activities at a sufficient level of detail to allow NIDRR to select potential peer reviewers; (3) a list of proposed RRTC staff including the Center Director and key personnel; and (4) a list of individuals whose selection as a peer reviewer might constitute a conflict of interest due to involvement in proposal development, selection as an advisory board member, co-PI relationships, etc.

The signed, original LOI, or with prior approval an e-mail or facsimile copy, must be received by NIDRR no later than June 9, 2003. Applicants that submit e-mail or facsimile copies must follow up by sending to NIDRR the signed original copy no later than one week after the date the e-mail or facsimile copy was sent. All communications pertaining to the LOI

must be sent to: Ruth Brannon, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, SW., room 3425, Switzer Building, Washington, DC 20202-2645. For further information regarding the LOI requirement, contact Ruth Brannon at (202) 358-2971 or by e-mail at: ruth.brannon@ed.gov.

Proposed Priorities

The Assistant Secretary proposes to fund up to four RRTCs that will focus on improving the community integration outcomes of persons with disabilities. Each RRTC must:

(1) Identify, develop, and evaluate rehabilitation techniques to address its respective area of research and improve outcomes for its designated population group;

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

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

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

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

- Conduct a state-of-the-science conference on its respective area of research in the third year of the grant cycle and publish a comprehensive report on the final outcomes of the conference in the fourth year of the grant cycle;

- 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 Center;

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

- Demonstrate how the RRTC project will yield measurable results for people with disabilities;