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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Donna Nangle, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, SW., room 3412, Switzer Building, Washington, DC 20202-2645.

Telephone: (202) 205-5880 or via Internet: Donna.Nangle@ed.gov.

If you use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD), you may call the TDD number at (202) 205-4475.

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

Dated: May 23, 2003.

Robert H. Pasternack,

Assistant Secretary for Special Education and, Rehabilitative Services.

[FR Doc. 03-13395 Filed 5-28-03; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4000-01-P

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services.

AGENCY: Office of Special Education Programs, Department of Education.

ACTION: Notice of extension of project period and waiver.

SUMMARY: The Secretary waives the requirements in the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR), at 34 CFR 75.250 and 75.261(a), respectively, that generally prohibit project periods exceeding 5 years and project extensions involving the obligation of additional Federal funds to enable the currently-funded Regional Resource Centers (RRCs) to receive funding from June 1, 2003 until May 31, 2004.

DATES: This notice is effective June 1, 2003.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Marie Roane, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, SW., room 3611, Switzer Building, Washington, DC 20202-2641. Telephone: (202) 205-8451.

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

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SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Invitation to Comment

On March 31, 2003, we published a notice in the **Federal Register** (68 FR 15439-15440) proposing an extension of project period and waiver in order to—

- (1) Give the current grantees early notice of the possibility that additional months of funding may be available through continuation awards; and
- (2) Request comments on the proposed extension and waiver.

There are no differences between the notice of proposed extension and waiver and this notice of final extension and waiver.

Analysis of Comments and Changes

In response to the Assistant Secretary's invitation in the notice of proposed extension and waiver, three parties submitted comments. One party submitted comments in agreement with the proposal to extend the grant period of the current grantees. Two parties submitted comments opposing the proposed extension and waiver. Generally, we do not address technical and other minor changes, as well as suggested changes the law does not authorize us to make. Moreover, we do not address comments that do not express views on the substance of the proposed notice.

An analysis of the parties' comments opposing the proposed extension and waiver and our response follows.

Comment: One commenter stated that funding should be cut for the RRCs rather than waive the EDGAR requirement for a project period extension. The commenter further stated that it is more important to get services to children with disabilities and States than it is to have another intermediate intervening system.

Discussion: The existing RRCs are currently involved in carrying out activities related to the Office of Special Education Programs initiative to identify and disseminate alternative approaches to identifying children with disabilities. The Secretary believes that this is an important endeavor and the current RRCs have already conducted extensive training and information activities related to State implementation of IDEA and they are best suited to assist in efforts to provide or gather information related to the activities described in this notice.

Change: None.

Comment: One commenter stated that the proposed extension and waiver should not be approved. The commenter further stated that by granting the proposed extension and waiver, it curtails the current competitive system, and serves to reward current grantees without consideration of potential grantees that might better provide for current needs.

Discussion: The Secretary has determined that there is a critical need in the States for identifying and disseminating alternative approaches to identify children with learning disabilities. Waiting until after a new RRC competition would hinder the efforts that are in place. The Secretary believes that by providing continuous support to the existing grantees will avoid the disruption of activities that are currently taking place in the regions to address these needs.