

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION****RIN 1820-ZA14****Rehabilitation Continuing Education Programs****AGENCY:** Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Department of Education.**ACTION:** Notice of proposed priorities.

**SUMMARY:** The Assistant Secretary for the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services proposes priorities under the Rehabilitation Continuing Education Programs. The Assistant Secretary may use these priorities for competitions in fiscal year (FY) 2003 and in later years. We take this action to focus on training in an identified area of national need. The purpose of these priorities is to select entities to provide leadership for the Institute on Rehabilitation Issues (IRI) topic study groups and to plan and conduct the National IRI Forum. We intend these priorities to meet the needs of our customers by improving the responsiveness of the IRI study process to changes in the field of vocational rehabilitation (VR).

**DATES:** We must receive your comments on or before July 21, 2003.**ADDRESSES:** Address all comments about these proposed priorities to Christine Marschall, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, SW., Switzer Building, room 3325, Washington, DC 20202-2649. If you prefer to send your comments through the Internet, use the following address: [Christine.Marschall@ed.gov](mailto:Christine.Marschall@ed.gov).

You must include the term "Rehabilitation Continuing Education Programs" in the subject line of your electronic message.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Christine Marschall. Telephone: (202) 205-8926 or via Internet: [Christine.Marschall@ed.gov](mailto:Christine.Marschall@ed.gov).

If you use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD), you may call the TDD number at (202) 205-8133.

Individuals with disabilities may obtain this document in an alternative format (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, or computer diskette) on request to the contact person listed under **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:****Invitation To Comment**

We invite you to submit comments regarding these proposed priorities. To ensure that your comments have maximum effect in developing the notice of final priorities, we urge you to

identify clearly the specific proposed priority that each comment addresses.

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

During and after the comment period, you may inspect all public comments about these proposed priorities in room 3036, 330 C Street SW., Washington, DC, between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 4 p.m., Eastern time, Monday through Friday of each week except Federal holidays.

**Assistance to Individuals With Disabilities in Reviewing the Rulemaking Record**

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

The Rehabilitation Continuing Education Programs—

(a) Train newly employed State agency staff at the administrative, supervisory, professional, paraprofessional, or clerical levels in order to develop needed skills for effective agency performance;

(b) Provide training opportunities for experienced State agency personnel at all levels of State agency practice to upgrade their skills and to develop mastery of new program developments dealing with significant issues, priorities, and legislative thrusts of the State and Federal vocational rehabilitation program; and

(c) Develop and conduct training programs for staff of—

(1) Private rehabilitation agencies and facilities that cooperate with State vocational rehabilitation units in providing vocational rehabilitation and other rehabilitation services;

(2) Centers for independent living; and

(3) Client assistance programs.

We will announce the final priorities in a notice in the **Federal Register**. We will determine the final priorities after considering responses to this notice and other information available to the Department. This notice does not

preclude us from proposing or funding additional priorities, subject to meeting applicable rulemaking requirements.

**Note:** This notice does not solicit applications. In any year in which we choose to use these proposed priorities, we invite applications through a notice in the **Federal Register**. When inviting applications we designate each priority as absolute, competitive preference, or invitational. The effect of each type of priority follows:

**Absolute priority:** Under an absolute priority, we consider only applications that meet the priority (34 CFR 75.105(c)(3)).

**Competitive preference priority:** Under a competitive preference priority, we give competitive preference to an application by either: (1) Awarding additional points, depending on how well or the extent to which the application meets the priority (34 CFR 75.105(c)(2)(i)); or (2) selecting an application that meets the competitive priority over an application of comparable merit that does not meet the priority (34 CFR 75.105(c)(2)(ii)).

**Invitational priority:** Under an invitational priority, we are particularly interested in applications that meet the invitational priority. However, we do not give an application that meets the priority a competitive or absolute preference over other applications (34 CFR 75.105(c)(1)).

**Priorities****Proposed Priority 1—Leadership of IRI Primary Study Group Background**

The Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) has sponsored national study groups currently known as the Institute on Rehabilitation Issues (IRI) for 55 years. The IRI process consists of groups of between 10 and 15 subject experts from the field of rehabilitation, referred to as IRI scholars, known as Primary Study Groups (PSG), which meet a minimum of three times over the course of the project year to study a selected topic. Two topics are selected annually by the RSA Commissioner, in consultation with the IRI planning committee, which consists of members from RSA, State VR agencies, persons served by State VR agencies, rehabilitation educational institutions, and one additional member who is a family member of a person with a disability or is a representative of a community-based rehabilitation program or an organization of persons with disabilities. PSG chairpersons and members are selected by the RSA Commissioner, with input from the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation, the National Organization of Rehabilitation Partners,