

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION****RIN 1820 ZA17****National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR)****AGENCY:** Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Department of Education.**ACTION:** Notice of final priorities.

**SUMMARY:** The Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) announces final priorities for Research Projects, a Research Infrastructure Capacity Building Project, a Technical Assistance Resource Center on Parenting with a Disability Project, and Development Projects under the Disability and Rehabilitation Research Projects (DRRP) Program of NIDRR for fiscal year (FY) 2003 and later years. We take these actions to focus research attention on areas of national need. We intend these priorities to improve the rehabilitation services and outcomes for individuals with disabilities.

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** This priority is effective August 25, 2003.

**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 the Internet: [donna.nangle@ed.gov](mailto:donna.nangle@ed.gov).

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

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:****Disability and Rehabilitation Research Projects (DRRP) Program**

The purpose of the DRRP program is to plan and conduct research, demonstration projects, training, and related activities that help to maximize the full inclusion and integration of individuals with disabilities into society and to improve the effectiveness of services authorized under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (the Act).

An applicant for assistance under this program must demonstrate in its application how it will address, in whole or in part, the needs of individuals with disabilities from minority backgrounds (34 CFR 350.40(a)).

The approaches an applicant may take to meet this requirement may include one or more of the following (34 CFR 350.40(b)):

(1) Proposing project objectives addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities from minority backgrounds.

(2) Demonstrating that the project will address a problem that is of particular significance to individuals with disabilities from minority backgrounds.

(3) Demonstrating that individuals from minority backgrounds will be included in study samples in sufficient numbers to generate information pertinent to individuals with disabilities from minority backgrounds.

(4) Drawing study samples and program participant rosters from populations or areas that include individuals from minority backgrounds.

(5) Providing outreach to individuals with disabilities from minority backgrounds to ensure that they are aware of rehabilitation services, clinical care, or training offered by the project.

(6) Disseminating materials to or otherwise increasing the access to disability information among minority populations.

Under the DRRP program, we define a research project as basic or applied (34 CFR 350.5). Research is classified on a continuum from basic to applied:

(1) Basic research is research in which the investigator is concerned primarily with gaining new knowledge or understanding of a subject without reference to any immediate application or utility.

(2) Applied research is research in which the investigator is primarily interested in developing new knowledge, information, or understanding which can be applied to a predetermined rehabilitation problem or need. Applied research builds on selected findings from basic research.

In carrying out a research activity under this program (34 CFR 350.13), a grantee must:

(a) Identify one or more hypotheses; and

(b) Based on the hypotheses identified, perform an intensive systematic study directed toward—  
(1) New or full scientific knowledge; or

(2) Understanding of the subject or problem studied.

Under the DRRP program, we define a development activity as the use of knowledge and understanding gained from research to create materials, devices, systems, or methods beneficial to the target population, including design and development of prototypes and processes.

**Note:** NIDRR supports the goals of President Bush's New Freedom Initiative (NFI). The NFI can be accessed on the Internet at the following site: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/freedominitiative/freedominitiative.html>.

The final priorities are in concert with NIDRR's Long-Range Plan (the Plan). The Plan is comprehensive and integrates many issues relating to disability and rehabilitation research topics. While applicants will find many sections throughout the Plan that support potential research to be conducted under these final priorities, a specific reference is included for each topic presented in this notice. The Plan can be accessed on the Internet at the following site: <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/NIDRR/Products>.

Through the implementation of the Plan, NIDRR seeks to: (1) Improve the quality and utility of disability and rehabilitation research; (2) foster an exchange of expertise, information, and training to facilitate the advancement of knowledge and understanding of the unique needs of traditionally underserved populations; (3) determine best strategies and programs to improve rehabilitation outcomes for underserved populations; (4) identify research gaps; (5) identify mechanisms of integrating research and practice; and (6) disseminate findings.

We published a separate notice of each proposed priority (NPP) in the **Federal Register** on May 9, 2003.

*Priority 1—Research Projects* (84.133A-1) (68 FR 25014).

*Priority 2—Research Infrastructure Capacity Building* (84.133A-4) (68 FR 25009).

*Priority 3—Technical Assistance Resource Center on Parenting with a Disability* (84.133A-5) (68 FR 25017).

*Priority 4—Development Projects* (84.133A-7) (68 FR 25006).

We have combined these four priorities in this notice of final priorities (NFP).

There are no significant differences between the NPPs and this NFP.

**Analysis of Comments and Changes**

In response to our invitation in the NPPs, several parties submitted comments.

We discuss these comments and changes in the Analysis of Comments and Changes section published as an appendix to this notice.

**Note:** This NFP does *not* solicit applications. In any year in which we choose to use one or more of these priorities, we invite applications through a notice in the **Federal Register**. A notice inviting applications for FY 2003 awards was published in the **Federal Register** on May 29,