

address the same issue. The peer review process will evaluate the merits of the proposal.

*Changes:* None.

*Violence:*

*Comment:* One commenter expressed an opinion that focusing on analysis of "extant data from crime reports" might unnecessarily limit the scope of research in the proposed DRRP priority on violence.

*Discussion:* NIDRR agrees that it might be valuable to collect new data to answer research questions in this area. Nothing in the priority precludes an applicant from suggesting such an approach. However, NIDRR has no basis for requiring all applicants to collect new data. The peer review process will evaluate the merits of the proposal.

*Changes:* None.

Technical Assistance Resource Center

*Comment:* One commenter suggested that the Technical Assistance Resource Center provide information on coordinated services for parents who are deaf or hard of hearing.

*Discussion:* NIDRR agrees that this might be a useful service. Nothing in the priority prohibits an applicant from suggesting this approach. However, NIDRR has no basis for requiring that all applicants take this approach. The peer review process will evaluate the merits of the proposal.

*Changes:* None.

Research Methods for Underserved Populations

*Comment:* One commenter expressed concern that Native Americans and Alaska Natives are listed with other minority population categories as a potential focus of this priority and recommended that the priority should specify the target population so that researchers studying different ethnic populations do not have to compete against each other.

*Discussion:* NIDRR is committed to improving research methods for studying all minority and ethnic populations. Nothing in the priority precludes an applicant from targeting a specific population. The peer review process will evaluate the merits of the proposal.

*Changes:* None.

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## DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

[RIN 1820 ZA18]

### 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 a Disability Demographics and Statistics Center, Community

Integration Outcomes Centers, and Health and Function Centers under the Rehabilitation Research and Training Centers (RRTC) Program under the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (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:** These priorities are 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, audiotape, or computer diskette) on request to the contact person listed under **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**.

#### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

### Rehabilitation Research and Training Centers

We may make awards for up to 60 months through grants or cooperative agreements to public and private agencies and organizations, including institutions of higher education, Indian tribes, and tribal organizations, to conduct research, demonstration, and training activities regarding rehabilitation in order to enhance opportunities for meeting the needs of, and addressing the barriers confronted by, individuals with disabilities in all aspects of their lives. Each RRTC must be operated by or in collaboration with an institution of higher education or providers of rehabilitation or other appropriate services. RRTCs conduct coordinated and integrated advanced programs of research targeted toward the production of new knowledge to improve rehabilitation methodology and service delivery systems, alleviate or stabilize disability conditions, or promote maximum social and economic independence for persons with disabilities. Additional information on the RRTC program can be found at: [http://www.ed.gov/officers/OSERS/NIDRR/Programs/res\\_program.html#RRTC](http://www.ed.gov/officers/OSERS/NIDRR/Programs/res_program.html#RRTC).

### General Requirements of Rehabilitation Research and Training Centers

RRTCs must:

- Carry out coordinated advanced programs of rehabilitation research;
- Provide training, including graduate, pre-service, and in-service training to help rehabilitation personnel more effectively provide rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities;
- Provide technical assistance to individuals with disabilities, their representatives, providers, and other interested parties;
- Disseminate informational materials to individuals with disabilities, their representatives, providers, and other interested parties;
- Serve as centers for national excellence in rehabilitation research for individuals with disabilities, their representatives, providers, and other interested parties; and
- Involve individuals with disabilities and individuals from minority backgrounds as participants in research as well as training.

The Department is particularly interested in ensuring that the expenditure of public funds is justified by the execution of intended activities and the advancement of knowledge and, thus, has built this accountability into the selection criteria. Not later than three years after the establishment of any RRTC, NIDRR will conduct one or more reviews of the activities and achievements of the Center. In accordance with the provisions of 34 CFR 75.253(a), continued funding depends at all times on satisfactory performance and accomplishment.

**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 the topics 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