

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 (NPPs) in the **Federal Register** on May 9, 2003.

Priority 1—Disability Demographics and Statistics Center (84.133B–1) (68 FR 25004).

Priority 2—Community Integration Outcomes Centers (84.133B–5) (68 FR 25019).

Priority 3—Health and Function Centers (84.133B–7) (68 FR 25011).

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

Analysis of Comments and Changes

In response to our invitation in the NPPs, we received 269 comments.

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

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

Note: This notice does not solicit applications. In any year in which we choose to use one or more of these priorities, we will do so through a notice in the **Federal Register**. A notice inviting applications for FY 2003 awards was published in the **Federal Register** on May 29, 2003 (68 FR 32023). When inviting applications we designate these priorities 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 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)).

Background

The background statements for the following priorities were published in the NPPs on May 9, 2003.

Priorities

Priority 1—Disability Demographics And Statistics Center

The Assistant Secretary will fund one RRTC on disability demographics and statistics. The purpose of this RRTC is to support rigorous collaborative research to generate new knowledge that advances evidence-based decision making to improve the lives of persons with disabilities. The references for this topic can be found in the Plan, chapter 2, Dimensions of Disability: Age, Gender, Education, Income, and Geography; chapter 7, Associated Disability Areas: Disability Statistics. The RRTC must:

(1) Conduct analyses using a variety of data sources, including those that assess facilitators and barriers to participation in society, to address the status and understanding of the population of individuals with disabilities;

(2) Identify, develop as necessary, and validate a series of best-practice approaches that facilitate the selection of appropriate measures, ensure a high degree of power and representativeness of the sample, and apply techniques of interviewing and data collection that lead to high levels of quality and relevance of information while minimizing the burden on respondents;

(3) Identify, develop as necessary, and evaluate instruments, data sources, administrative records, or other sources that allow Federal policymakers to use the International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health (ICF) classification system for evidence-based decisionmaking;

(4) Serve as a resource on disability statistics and demographics for Federal and other government agencies, policymakers, consumers, advocates, researchers, and others; and

(5) Develop quality standards to guide the identification of information for dissemination and conduct all activities to prepare, produce, and disseminate findings in a variety of media, such as web-based and print documents, meetings and conferences, and teleconferences that are targeted to the wide range of audiences who need such information.

In addition to the activities proposed by the applicant to carry out these purposes, the 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. This conference must include materials from experts internal and external to the center;

- 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.

- 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;

- Identify specific performance targets and propose outcome indicators, along with time lines to reach these targets; and

- Demonstrate how the RRTC project can transfer research findings to practical applications in planning, policy-making, program administration, and delivery of services to individuals with disabilities.

Priority 2—Community Integration Outcomes Centers

The Assistant Secretary will 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, policymakers, and the community;

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

(4) Develop a systematic plan for widespread dissemination of