

have determined as necessary for administering this program effectively and efficiently.

In assessing the potential costs and benefits—both quantitative and qualitative—of this NFP, we have determined that the benefits of the final priorities justify the costs.

Summary of Potential Costs and Benefits

The potential cost associated with these final priorities is minimal while the benefits are significant. Grantees may anticipate costs associated with completing the application process in terms of staff time, copying, and mailing or delivery. The use of e-Application technology reduces mailing and copying costs significantly.

The benefits of the RRTC program have been well established over the years given that similar projects have been successfully completed. These final priorities will generate new knowledge through research, dissemination, utilization, training, and technical assistance projects.

The benefit of these final priorities and proposed applications and project requirements will be the establishment of new RRTCs that generate, disseminate, and promote the use of new information that will improve the options for disabled individuals to perform regular activities in the community.

Applicable Program Regulations: 34 CFR part 350.

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(Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number: 84.133B, Rehabilitation Research and Training Center Program)

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

Dated: July 22, 2003.

Robert H. Pasternack,
Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services.

Appendix

Analysis of Comments and Changes

General

Comment: Several commenters raised concerns about the failure of the priorities to require a focus on the Native American population, citing the high rates of disability within this population.

Discussion: Nothing in the priorities precludes an applicant from focusing on the needs of Native Americans. The peer review process will evaluate the merits of the proposal.

Changes: None.

Disability Demographics and Statistics Center

Comment: One commenter expressed concern that the Disability Demographics and Statistics Center priority does not specifically target analyses focused on the status of individuals who are American Indian or Alaskan Native.

Discussion: Nothing in the priority precludes an applicant from including these populations in proposed research. However, NIDRR has no basis for requiring that all applicants focus on these populations in responding to these priorities. The peer review process will evaluate the merits of the proposal.

Changes: None.

Community Integration

General

Comment: Several commenters suggested that NIDRR increase the number of funded centers under these competitions.

Discussion: The proposed number of funded centers is not part of the proposed priorities and is not subject to comment.

Changes: None.

Comment: Several commenters expressed concern about NIDRR's plan to publish the Notice Inviting Application (NIA) prior to the end of the comment period, effectively shortening the time from publication of the proposed priority to the due date for the applications.

Discussion: NIDRR announced in the NIA that, if it received comments that resulted in changes to the priorities, an extension would be granted to allow for more time to respond in light of such changes. NIDRR believes that a period of 60 days from the date of the NIA to the due date of the proposal is adequate time to prepare a proposal in response to the priorities.

Changes: None.

Comment: Many commenters expressed concern that NIDRR was "forcing different disability groups" to compete against each other for funds.

Discussion: The proposed grouping of NIDRR competitions is not part of the proposed priorities and is not subject to comment. However, NIDRR offers the following observation. NIDRR has previously conducted successful competitions in which it listed more topics than it could fund. This

approach will provide NIDRR with peer review input to guide decisions about funding worthy topics. This grouping is intended to foster competition to improve research outcomes and have a positive impact on the lives of individuals with disabilities.

Changes: None.

Comment: Many commenters expressed concern that NIDRR's priorities do not provide sufficient opportunities for applicants that are concerned with psychiatric disability.

Discussion: The announcement includes a proposed new priority topic on the Community Integration of Individuals with Psychiatric Disabilities. In addition to this opportunity, NIDRR's commitment to the area of psychiatric disability is demonstrated by its current funding of five RRTCs on issues of psychiatric disability and mental health. In addition, NIDRR funds a number of field-initiated projects that focus on this topic as well as an advanced research training project and a Disability Rehabilitation Research Project (DRRP) on mental health service delivery. NIDRR's commitment to this critical area has not changed, and NIDRR is committed to supporting future initiatives in this area.

Changes: None.

Comment: One commenter suggested that the definition of "critical stakeholders," in the list of requirements for each RRTC, be revised to include the word "community"—and noted that the realization of true community integration must include the community itself.

Discussion: NIDRR agrees that community members are critical components of community integration for individuals with disabilities and that they should be included in training and technical assistance efforts.

Changes: The priority has been changed to reflect this addition.

Comment: One commenter suggested that programs measuring Presidential, Congressional, and Judicial objectives regarding community inclusion be included in RRTC activities, by means of national and state data collection activities.

Discussion: NIDRR agrees that data collection to assist the measurement of community inclusion-related national objectives would be worthwhile, and applicants may submit applications in this area. However, NIDRR has no basis for requiring applicants to focus on this issue. The peer review process will evaluate the merits of the proposal.

Changes: None.

Psychiatric Disability

Comment: One commenter expressed concern that the description of the proposed RRTC on Community Integration for People with Psychiatric Disabilities is not age-specific but instead indicates that, "the target population may include individuals from any age group." The commenter noted that children and adults, while having some overlapping areas, also have distinct age-specific needs.

Discussion: NIDRR agrees that children and adults have many distinct age-specific needs. The language in the proposed priority was