

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

RIN 1820-ZA28

**Special Demonstration Programs—
Model Demonstration Projects—
Mentoring for Transition-Age Youth
and Young Adults With Disabilities****AGENCY:** Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Department of Education.**ACTION:** Notice of proposed priority, definitions, and application requirements.

SUMMARY: The Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services proposes a priority, definitions, and application requirements under the Special Demonstration Programs focusing on mentoring models that provide appropriate supports for transition-age youth and young adults with disabilities. The mentoring models developed under this program must incorporate effective, research-based mentoring methods. The Assistant Secretary may use this priority, definitions, and the requirements for competitions in fiscal year (FY) 2003 and later years. We take this action to increase meaningful postsecondary education and quality employment outcomes through a mentoring system within State vocational rehabilitation (VR) agencies. Grants would be made to State VR agencies.

DATES: We must receive your comments on or before September 4, 2003.

ADDRESSES: Address all comments about this proposed priority, definitions, and application requirements to Alfreda Reeves, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, SW., room 3314, Switzer Building, Washington, DC 20202-2645. If you prefer to send your comments through the Internet, use one of the following addresses: Alfreda.Reeves@ed.gov or Pamela.Martin@ed.gov.

You must include the term "Mentoring Model Demonstration" in the subject line of your electronic message.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Alfreda Reeves. Telephone: (202) 205-9361 or via Internet:

Alfreda.Reeves@ed.gov. Or Pamela Martin, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, SW., room 3314, Switzer Building, Washington, DC 20202-2645. Telephone: (202) 205-8494 or via Internet: Pamela.Martin@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 one of the contact persons listed under **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**Invitation to Comment**

We invite you to submit comments regarding this proposed priority, definitions, and application requirements. To ensure that your comments have maximum effect in developing the notice of final priority, definitions, and application requirements, we urge you to be specific about any recommended changes. We are particularly interested in receiving comments on the following topics:

1. The definitions of "mentor" and "mentoring" as they appear in this notice.

2. The requirement to collaborate with a consumer-controlled organization.

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 this notice. 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 this proposed priority, definitions, and application requirements in room 3038, Switzer Building, 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 this proposed priority, definitions, and application requirements. If you want to schedule an appointment for this type of aid, please contact one of the individuals listed under **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**.

We will announce the final priority, definitions, and application requirements in a notice in the **Federal Register**. We will determine the final priority, definitions, and application requirements 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 this proposed priority, definitions, and application requirements, we invite applications through a notice in the **Federal Register**. When inviting applications we designate the 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 competitive 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 invitational priority a competitive or absolute preference over other applications (34 CFR 75.105(c)(1)).

Priority**Proposed Priority—Model Demonstration Projects—Mentoring for Transition-Age Youth and Young Adults With Disabilities**

These model demonstration projects would test whether increases in meaningful postsecondary education and quality employment outcomes can be achieved through the use of mentors by State VR agencies.

The program will be conducted under section 303(b) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (Act). The proposed priority supports section 303(b) by furthering the purposes of the Act, specifically by empowering individuals with disabilities to maximize employment, economic self-sufficiency, independence, and inclusion and integration into society.

Background

The educational and employment achievements of youth and young adults with disabilities lag significantly behind those of their peers without disabilities. The Office of Special Education