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SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

Program: Cooperative Agreements for Homeless Outreach Projects and Evaluation (HOPE); Program Announcement No. SSA-OPDR-03-02

AGENCY: Social Security Administration.

ACTION: Announcement of the availability of cooperative agreement funds for fiscal year 2003 and request for applications.

SUMMARY: The Social Security Administration requests applications for cooperative agreement funding to support projects that provide targeted outreach, supportive services, and benefit application assistance to individuals who are chronically homeless.

DATES: The closing date for receipt of cooperative agreement applications under this announcement is November 25, 2003. Section VI of this announcement contains instructions for submitting applications under this announcement.

Prospective applicants are also asked to submit, preferably by October 16, 2003, a fax, post card, letter, or e-mail of intent that includes (1) the program announcement number (SSA-OPDR-03-02) and title (Homeless Outreach Projects and Evaluation); (2) the name of the agency or organization that is applying; and (3) the name, mailing address, e-mail address, telephone number, and fax number for the organization's contact person.

The notice of intent should be (1) e-mailed to Homeless.Outreach@ssa.gov, using "HOPE—Notice of Intent" in the subject line; (2) faxed to (410) 597-0825, to the attention of the HOPE Project Team; or (3) mailed to Social Security Administration, Office of Program Development and Research, Office of Program Development, 128 Altmeyer Building; 6401 Security Boulevard, Baltimore, Maryland, 21235-6401, Attention: HOPE Project Team.

The notice of intent is not required, is not binding, and does not enter into the review process of a subsequent application. The purpose of the notice is to allow SSA staff to estimate the number of technical reviewers needed and to avoid potential conflicts of interest in the review.

ADDRESSES: All applications for funding under this announcement should be submitted via the new process that the Federal government has established for electronic submission of applications for grant and cooperative agreement funding.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Send questions about this announcement to the following Internet address: Homeless.Outreach@ssa.gov. When sending a question, use the program announcement number (SSA-OPDR-03-02) and the date of this announcement, September 26, 2003. Questions and answers will be posted to the "Outreach Initiatives" link on the Social Security Service to the Homeless Web site at: <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/homelessness>. The identity of questioners will not be revealed when questions and answers are posted on this Web site. All applicants are encouraged to review the Web site while developing their applications.

Although the Internet is the preferred method of communication, applicants who have questions about the program content of the application may also contact: Virginia McCaskey, Research Analyst, or Leola Brooks, Director, Office of Program Development. The phone number for Virginia McCaskey is (410) 965-3425, and the phone number for Leola Brooks is (410) 965-2219. Inquiries may also be faxed to (410) 597-0825, or mailed to: Social Security Administration, Office of Program Development and Research, Office of Program Development, 128 Altmeyer Building, 6401 Security Boulevard, Baltimore, Maryland 21235-6401, Attention: HOPE Project Team.

For general (non-programmatic) information—regarding submission of applications, contact: Phyllis Y. Smith, Grants Management Officer, Social Security Administration, Office of Acquisition and Grants, Grants Management Team, 1-E-4 Gwynn Oak Building, 1710 Gwynn Oak Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21207-5279, phyllis.y.smith@ssa.gov, phone (410) 965-9518.

Application Kit: Section VI of this announcement contains instructions for obtaining an application kit.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: This overview of the HOPE projects is included to allow potential applicants to quickly learn the contents of this announcement, and to decide whether they are eligible to apply for the funding opportunity described. It follows the outline of the full text of the first three sections of the announcement.

Program Description: SSA is making cooperative agreement funding available to demonstrate methods to improve the quality of assistance that medical and social service providers give to homeless individuals who file claims for Social Security benefits. The projects are shaped by SSA knowledge about effective outreach practices, as well as evaluation data from previous outreach demonstration projects.

Awardees of cooperative agreement funding will be required to provide outreach, supportive services, and benefit application assistance to chronically homeless adults and/or children. The target population for these projects is homeless individuals who are members of under-served groups, which may include people with severe and persistent mental illness, HIV infection, limited English proficiency, multiple and co-occurring disorders, or cognitive impairments, as well as homeless veterans with disabilities.

Applicants may propose to establish presumptive disability screening procedures or pre-release procedures for institutionalized individuals with disabilities. Applicants may also propose to use project funding to improve their capacity to provide representative payment services to beneficiaries, strengthen their ability to assist disability claimants with filing electronic disability applications, or develop an employment intervention.

SSA will train staff of organizations that are awarded funding under this announcement. The focus of the training will be to improve participant knowledge about SSA's requirements for disability case processing. SSA will conduct an evaluation of projects, with a focus on the impact that training has on the quality of assistance provided to disability claimants by the grantee. SSA is particularly interested in achieving outcomes such as reduced processing time, and reduced denials for initial claims from individuals that would be eligible for benefits under SSA's rules.

Award Information: Congress appropriated \$8 million in FY 2003, and directed SSA to use the appropriation to provide outreach to "homeless and under-served" populations. SSA intends to fund approximately 30 projects, with awards of up to \$200,000 in the first year of project funding. Subject to the availability of additional appropriations, SSA plans to fund projects for four years, with requirements that awardees reduce their dependence on cooperative agreement funding in each year of the projects. Year 4 activities will consist only of follow-up data reporting. SSA has reserved a portion of the appropriation to evaluate the projects,