

## DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

## Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services; Special Education—Training and Information for Parents of Children With Disabilities

AGENCY: Department of Education.

ACTION: Notice of final priority.

**SUMMARY:** The Secretary announces a final priority for one program administered by the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), as amended. The Secretary may use this priority to support grants in fiscal year 1999 and subsequent years. The Secretary takes this action to focus Federal assistance on identified needs to improve results for children with disabilities. This final priority is intended to ensure wide and effective use of program funds.

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** This priority takes effect on July 9, 1999.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** For further information on the priority under the Training and Information for Parents of Children with Disabilities Program contact the U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, SW., room 3527, Switzer Building, Washington, DC 20202-2641. Telephone: (202) 205-8038. FAX: (202) 205-8105. Internet:

Debra\_Sturdivant@ed.gov

Individuals who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the TDD number: (202) 205-8953.

Individuals with disabilities may obtain a copy of this notice in an alternate format (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, or computer diskette) by contacting the Department at the address listed. However, the Department is not able to reproduce in an alternate format the standard forms included in the application package.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** This notice contains one final priority under the Training and Information for Parents of Children with Disabilities program authorized by IDEA.

On March 25, 1999, the Secretary published a notice of proposed priority for this program in the **Federal Register** (64 FR 14556).

This proposed priority supports the National Education Goals by helping to improve results for children with disabilities.

The publication of this priority does not preclude the Secretary from proposing additional priorities, nor does it limit the Secretary to funding only

this priority, subject to meeting applicable rulemaking requirements. Funding of particular projects depends on the availability of funds, and the quality of the applications received.

**Note:** This notice of final priority does not solicit applications. A notice inviting applications under this competition is published in a separate notice in this issue of the **Federal Register**.

**Analysis of Comments and Changes**

In response to the Secretary's invitation in the notice of proposed priority, seventeen parties submitted comments. An analysis of the comments and of the changes in the proposed priority follows. We discuss substantive issues under the sections of the priority to which they pertain. Generally, we do not address technical and other minor changes—and suggested changes the law does not authorize the Secretary to make.

**Comment:** One commenter questioned whether only the States listed in the March 25, 1999 **Federal Register** announcement would be considered for the fiscal year 1999 funding cycle. The commenter further recommended that the final priority include the four (4)-year schedule for submitting applications for all of the State awards.

**Discussion:** Only the States listed in the March 25, 1999 **Federal Register** announcement as eligible for the fiscal year 1999 funding cycle, Guam, Palau, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and the freely associated States will be eligible for funding in fiscal year 1999. The Parent Training and Information (PTI) centers program is moving the competition cycles for the centers to a four (4)-year cycle with a pre-determined schedule of the States eligible for the competition. Including the anticipated schedule in the priority itself would limit the Secretary's ability to revise the schedule based on unforeseen circumstances. The regular four (4)-year cycle is expected to be:

1999: AZ, DE, DC, IA, IN, MA, MN, MS, MO, SD, VA, WA, WY.

2000: HI, ID, LA, NH, NC, OK, PA, RI, TN, WV, VI, AS.

2001: AK, AL, CO, FL, KY, ME, MD, NE, NY, ND, NV, PR, VT, WI.

2002: AR, CA, CT, GA, IL, KS, MI, MT, NJ, NM, OH, OR, SC, TX, UT.

States and the freely associated States that are not listed here will be included in a cycle if and when they receive initial funding.

**Changes:** None.

**Comment:** Several commenters suggested that a five (5)-year funding schedule would be a better strategy than

the proposed four (4)-year funding schedule.

**Discussion:** The Secretary believes that four years provides a more appropriate funding cycle in order to provide adequate Federal oversight for the PTI centers.

**Changes:** None.

**Comment:** One commenter suggested that the annual reporting cycle should go to a process of reporting data from the beginning of a grant year to the end of a grant year.

**Discussion:** The statute requires an annual report by fiscal year. Therefore, the Secretary is not legally authorized to change this requirement by requesting that the PTI centers report data by grant year as opposed to reporting data by fiscal year.

**Changes:** None.

**Comment:** One commenter suggested that the language on page 14557, paragraph (a) of the priority should be amended to include parents of children that are not identified at all.

**Discussion:** The priority, as written, includes parents of children who are not identified at all. The language referring to children who may be inappropriately identified was intended to include those children who may not be identified at all. However, the Secretary acknowledges the concerns of the commenter and agrees to clarify the language of the priority.

**Changes:** The priority language will be amended by adding "including those who are not identified at all" to the end of the sentence.

**Comment:** One commenter suggested that parents would choose not to use the mediation process in States where the SEA uses its own staff as mediators. The commenter stated that parents have questions about the impartiality of mediators who work for the State and are vested in the State's interest.

**Discussion:** Section 615(e) (1) and (2) of IDEA includes language that requires that the mediation process must be conducted by a qualified and impartial mediator who is trained in effective mediation techniques. The statute further states that a local educational agency or State agency may establish procedures to require parents who choose not to use the mediation process, to meet with a disinterested party who is under contract with a PTI center or community parent resource center (CPRC), or an appropriate alternative dispute resolution entity, at a time and location convenient to the parents. The Secretary believes that the language contained in IDEA takes into account the concerns of the commenter.

**Changes:** None.

*Comment:* One commenter recommended that the Department should require entities such as colleges, universities, local schools, and State education agencies that receive Federal education funds, to seek partnerships with PTI centers as well as parents in the general population. The commenter further stated that networking, collaboration, and information sharing should not be the full responsibility of PTI centers but should be shared by all related entities.

*Discussion:* The Department supports partnerships among the PTI centers and entities such as colleges, universities, local schools, and State education agencies that receive Federal education funds. In addition, the Department has made significant investments to create the type of partnerships described by the commenter in order to promote and insure the implementation of the IDEA Amendments of 1997.

*Changes:* None.

*Comment:* One commenter recommended that PTI centers should be funded to specifically serve low income parents and children affected by learning disabilities.

*Discussion:* Section 682(b)(3) of IDEA states that each parent training and information center is required to serve the parents of infants, toddlers, and children with the full range of disabilities. Each of the centers should have information and knowledge about learning disabilities as well as an awareness of additional resources in the local area or State that are available for this group of children and their families.

*Changes:* None.

*Comment:* Several commenters suggested that the language requiring PTI centers to work cooperatively with the Community Parent Resource Centers (CPRCs) in the State should be expanded to require PTI centers to share some of their funding with CPRCs so that the work of the CPRCs is acknowledged and supported financially.

*Discussion:* The intent of paragraph (h) in the proposed priority to establish cooperative relations with the CPRCs was to reinforce the requirement in section 683(b)(3) of IDEA that the CPRCs establish cooperative partnerships with the PTI centers. PTI centers can choose to enter into projects with CPRCs where subcontracting could occur. However, the Secretary does not believe it is necessary for the PTI centers to share funding for the projects to maximize existing resources, work together when possible, and be supportive of each other.

*Changes:* There are no substantive changes. However, the order of paragraphs (g) and (h) in the proposed priority has been reversed in the final priority to make clear the intent of the priority.

*Comment:* One commenter suggested that the priority clarify that no new PTI centers will be funded in States where they currently exist.

*Discussion:* Other than interim awards for California, New York, and Illinois in fiscal year 1999, no awards will be made in any State that are not consistent with the regular four (4)-year funding cycle schedule.

*Changes:* None.

*Comment:* Several commenters suggested a change to the language of the proposed priority so that Parent to Parent programs are specifically mentioned as partners to PTI centers, share PTI centers' funding, and demonstrate cooperative relationships in their State.

*Discussion:* The Secretary believes that the concerns of the commenters are addressed within the work scope of the priority, which requires PTI centers to network and work with local organizations and agencies, including community-based organizations, such as Parent to Parent programs, that serve parents and families of children with disabilities. The Secretary further emphasizes that it is in the best interest of families who have children with disabilities that all providers of services and supports work together to maximize resources and reach as many families as possible.

*Changes:* None.

*Comment:* One commenter recommended that certain organizations, such as the protection and advocacy agencies, should not be eligible to receive PTI center funding.

*Discussion:* Under the current statute there is only one exclusion that is specifically mentioned—Institutions of Higher Education. Otherwise, any organization or entity that meets the eligibility criteria for this priority may apply for an award.

*Changes:* None.

*Comment:* One commenter suggested that the language in the priority requiring a project to budget for a two-day Project Director's meeting should be changed to read as follows: A project's budget must include funds to attend a regional Project Director's meeting to be held each year of the project.

*Discussion:* The Alliance Project, which is the national technical assistance project funded by the Office of Special Education Programs, funds and supports the attendance of project

directors to attend a two-day national conference in Washington, DC.

*Changes:* The priority language has been amended as suggested by the commenter.

*Comment:* Several commenters expressed concern about the need to fund a project that has as its focus the very diverse and specialized needs of traditionally underserved multicultural and multilingual families living in poverty in urban and in rural communities.

*Discussion:* Working with underserved, diverse families is part of the mandate for both the PTI centers and the CPRCs. It is not the intent of the PTI centers program to create two systems, but to encourage the integration of these groups where and when possible. The current technical assistance provider, Alliance, is aware of the need to provide a variety of approaches to support the diverse and specialized needs of traditionally underserved multicultural and multilingual families, and will continue to develop expertise and expand its services to meet the needs of all families.

*Changes:* None.

### **Special Education—Training and Information for Parents of Children With Disabilities**

#### **Purpose of Program**

The purpose of this program is to ensure that parents of children with disabilities receive training and information to help improve results for their children.

Under section 682(e) of IDEA, the Secretary is required to: (a) make at least one award to a parent organization in each State, unless the Secretary does not receive an application from such an organization in each State of sufficient quality to warrant approval; and (b) select among applications submitted by parent organizations in a State in a manner that ensures the most effective assistance to parents, including parents in urban and rural areas, in the State.

Eligible applicants for awards under this priority are parent organizations, as defined in section 682(g) of IDEA. A parent organization is a private nonprofit organization (other than an institution of higher education) that (a) has a board of directors, the parent and professional members of which are broadly representative of the population to be served and the majority of whom are parents of children with disabilities, that includes individuals with disabilities working in the fields of special education, related services, and early intervention; or (b) if the private

nonprofit organization does not have such a board, has a membership that represents the interest of individuals with disabilities and must establish a special governing board with the same requirements as paragraph (a) and develops a memorandum of understanding between this special governing board and the board of directors of the organization that clearly outlines the relationship between the board and the committee and the decision making responsibilities and authority of each.

#### *Priority*

Under section 682 of the Act, and 34 CFR 75.105(c)(3), the Secretary proposes to give an absolute preference to applications that meet the following priority. The Secretary proposes to fund under this competition only those applications that meet this proposed priority:

#### **Proposed Absolute Priority—Parent Training and Information Centers (84.328M)**

*Background:* The IDEA Amendments of 1997 strengthen the role of parents and increase their involvement in decisions about their children's education. Other changes in the law, increased dependence on and the use of technology, and a greater emphasis on networking and promoting partnerships between parents and school personnel, require the PTI centers to be strengthened and refocused. In order to allocate resources more equitably, create a unified system of service delivery, and provide the broadest coverage for the parents and families in every State, the Department will begin to make awards in four (4)-year cycles for each State. In FY 1999, applications for 4-year awards will be accepted for the following States: Arizona; Delaware; District of Columbia; Iowa; Indiana; Massachusetts; Minnesota; Mississippi; Missouri; South Dakota; Virginia; Washington; and Wyoming.

In addition to the above State awards, the Secretary intends to fund one award that focuses on the needs of Native-American families who have children with disabilities and one award that focuses on the needs of military families who have children with disabilities.

Until the first four (4)-year cycle is completed, there is a need to have an interim schedule for awards in States where there is more than one PTI and their current awards do not have the same end date. Therefore, we will hold a competition for one or more awards in these States for the time periods needed to match the end date of the last Center funded. Applications will be accepted

for FY 1999 interim competitions for the following States: (1) California—3-year award, (2) Illinois—3-year award, and (3) New York—2-year award.

*Priority:* The Secretary will establish an absolute priority to support parent training and information centers that—

(a) Provide training and information that meets the training and information needs of parents of children with disabilities in the area served by the center, particularly underserved parents and parents of children who may be inappropriately identified, including those who are not identified at all;

(b) Assist parents to understand the availability of, and how to effectively use, procedural safeguards under IDEA, including encouraging the use, and explaining the benefits, of alternative methods of dispute resolution, such as the mediation process described in IDEA;

(c) Serve the parents of infants, toddlers, and children with the full range of disabilities;

(d) Assist parents to—

(1) Better understand the nature of their children's disabilities and their educational and developmental needs;

(2) Communicate effectively with personnel responsible for providing special education, early intervention, and related services;

(3) Participate in decision making processes and the development of individualized education programs and individualized family service plans;

(4) Obtain appropriate information about the range of options, programs, services, and resources available to assist children with disabilities and their families;

(5) Understand the provisions of the Act for the education of, and the provision of early intervention services to, children with disabilities; and

(6) Participate in school reform activities;

(f) Contract with the State education agency, if the State elects to contract with the parent training and information center, for the purpose of meeting with parents who choose not to use the mediation process to encourage the use, and explain the benefits, of mediation consistent with sections 615(e)(2)(B) and (D) of IDEA;

(g) Establish cooperative relations with the Community Parent Resource Center or Centers in their State in accordance with section 683(b)(3) of IDEA;

(h) Network with appropriate clearinghouses, including organizations conducting national dissemination activities under section 685(d) of IDEA, and with other national, State, and local organizations and agencies, such as

protection and advocacy agencies, that serve parents and families of children with the full range of disabilities;

(i) Annually report to the Secretary on—

(1) The number of parents to whom parent training and information centers provided information and training in the most recently concluded fiscal year; and

(2) The effectiveness of strategies used to reach and serve parents, including underserved parents of children with disabilities; and

(j) If there is more than one parent center in a particular State, coordinate their activities to ensure the most effective assistance to parents in that State.

An applicant must identify the strategies it will undertake—

(a) To ensure that the needs for training and information of underserved parents of children with disabilities in the areas to be served are effectively met, particularly in underserved areas of the State; and

(b) To work with the community-based organizations, particularly in the underserved areas of the State.

A parent training and information center that receives assistance under this absolute priority may also conduct the following activities—

(a) Provide information to teachers and other professionals who provide special education and related services to children with disabilities;

(b) Assist students with disabilities to understand their rights and responsibilities on reaching the age of majority, as included under section 615(m) of IDEA; and

(c) Assist parents of children with disabilities to be informed participants in the development and implementation of the State improvement plan under IDEA.

A project's budget must include funds to attend a regional Project Directors' meeting to be held each year of the project.

In order to demonstrate eligibility to receive a grant, an applicant must describe how its board or special governing committee meets the criteria for a parent organization in section 682(g) of IDEA. In addition, any parent organization that establishes a special governing committee under section 682(g)(2) of IDEA must demonstrate that the by-laws of its organization allows the governing committee to be responsible for operating the project (consistent with existing fiscal policies of its organization).

Current funding levels, population of school age children, and the relative proportion of children living in poverty

will be considered in determining funding levels for grants.

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**Note:** The official version of this document is the document published in the **Federal Register**. Free Internet access to the official edition of the **Federal Register** and the Code of Federal Regulations is available on GPO Access at: <http://www.access.gpo.gov/nara/index.html>.

### Intergovernmental Review

The Training and Information for Parents of Children with Disabilities program is subject to the requirements of Executive Order 12372 and the regulations in 34 CFR Part 79. The objective of the Executive order is to foster an intergovernmental partnership and a strengthened federalism by relying on processes developed by State and local governments for coordination and review of proposed Federal assistance.

In accordance with the order, we intend this document to provide early notification of the Department's specific plans and actions for this program.

**Program Authority:** 20 U.S.C. 1482.

(Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Numbers: Special Education—Training and Information for Parents of Children with Disabilities, 84.328)

Dated: June 3, 1999.

**Judith E. Heumann,**

*Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services.*

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## DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

### Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services; Inviting Applications for New Awards for Fiscal Year 1999

**AGENCY:** Department of Education.

**SUMMARY:** This notice provides closing dates and other information regarding the transmittal of applications for one

fiscal year 1999 competition under one program authorized by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), as amended. This notice supports the National Education Goals by helping to improve results for children with disabilities.

**Note:** The Department of Education is not bound by any estimates in this notice.

### Special Education—Training and Information for Parents of Children With Disabilities [CFDA No. 84.328]

**Purpose of Program:** The purpose of this program is to ensure that parents of children with disabilities receive training and information to help improve results for their children.

**Eligible Applicants:** Eligible applicants for awards under this priority are parent organizations, as defined in section 682(g) of IDEA. A parent organization is a private nonprofit organization (other than an institution of higher education) that (a) has a board of directors, the parent and professional members of which are broadly representative of the population to be served and the majority of whom are parents of children with disabilities, that includes individuals with disabilities working in the fields of special education, related services, and early intervention; or (b) if the private nonprofit organization does not have such a board, has a membership that represents the interests of individuals with disabilities and must establish a special governing board with the same requirements as paragraph (a) and develops a memorandum of understanding between this special governing board and the board of directors of the organization that clearly outlines the relationship between the board and the committee and the decision making responsibilities and authority of each.

**Applicable Regulations:** (a) The Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR parts 74, 75, 76, 77, 79, 80, 81, 82, 85, and 97; and (b) The selection criteria for this priority are drawn from the EDGAR general selection criteria menu. The specific selection criteria for this priority are included in the funding application packet for this competition.

**Absolute Priority—Parent Training and Information Centers (84.328M)**

The priority for the Parent Training and Information Centers in the notice of final priority for this program, published elsewhere in this issue of the **Federal Register**, applies to this competition.

**Applications Available:** June 15, 1999.

**Deadline for Transmittal of Applications:** July 23, 1999.

**Deadline for Intergovernmental Review:** September 21, 1999.

**Estimated Number of Awards:** 18.

**Estimated Project Awards:** Project award amounts are for a single budget period of 12 months. The FY 1999 State awards, interim State awards, and awards focusing on Native American families and military families are listed below:

Arizona .....	Up to \$200,000
Delaware .....	Up to \$164,300
District of Columbia ....	Up to \$136,700
Indiana .....	Up to \$267,800
Iowa .....	Up to \$176,200
Massachusetts .....	Up to \$278,500
Minnesota .....	Up to \$267,000
Mississippi .....	Up to \$192,500
Missouri .....	Up to \$208,400
South Dakota .....	Up to \$159,773
Virginia .....	Up to \$290,900
Washington .....	Up to \$244,100
Wyoming .....	Up to \$128,500
California .....	Up to \$377,150
Illinois .....	Up to \$158,000
New York .....	Up to \$270,100
Native American Families.	Up to \$100,000
Military Families .....	Up to \$100,000

Awards may also be made to authorized entities in Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and the freely associated States. However, maximum funding levels have not been specified.

**Page Limits:** Part III of the application, the application narrative, is where an applicant addresses the selection criteria that are used by reviewers in evaluating an application. An applicant must limit Part III to the equivalent of no more than 60 double-spaced pages using the following standards: (1) a "page" is 8½" x 11" (on one side only) with one-inch margins (top, bottom, and sides); and (2) all text in the application narrative, including titles, headings, footnotes, quotations, references, and captions, as well as all text in charts, tables, figures, and graphs, must be double-spaced (no more than 3 lines per vertical inch). If using a proportional computer font, use no smaller than a 12-point font, and an average character density no greater than 18 characters per inch. If using a nonproportional font or a typewriter, do not use more than 12 characters to the inch.

The page limit does not apply to Part I—the cover sheet; Part II—the budget section (including the narrative budget justification); Part IV—the assurances and certifications; or the one-page abstract, resumes, bibliography, and letters of support. However, all of the application narrative must be included in Part III. If an application narrative uses a smaller print size, spacing, or