

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research; Notice of Final Funding Priorities for Fiscal Years 1995 and 1996 for Research and Demonstration Projects

AGENCY: Department of Education.

SUMMARY: The Secretary announces final funding priorities for Research and Demonstration (R&D) projects under the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR) for fiscal years 1995–1996. The Secretary takes this action to focus research attention on areas of national need consistent with NIDRR's long-range planning process. These priorities are intended to assist in the solutions to problems encountered by individuals with disabilities in their daily activities.

EFFECTIVE DATE: These priorities take effect on February 16, 1995.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: David Esquith, U.S. Department of Education, 600 Independence Avenue, S.W., Switzer Building, Room 3424, Washington, D.C. 20202–2601. Telephone: (202) 205–8801. Individuals who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the TDD number at (202) 205–8801.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: This notice contains three final priorities for the R&D program. These priorities are in the areas of accommodations for individuals with disabilities in adult education programs, reproductive issues for women with disabilities, and HIV/AIDS and disability.

Authority for the R&D program of NIDRR is contained in section 204(a) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (29 U.S.C. 760–762).

Under this program the Secretary makes awards to public agencies and private agencies and organizations, including institutions of higher education, Indian tribes, and tribal organizations. In part, this program is designed to assist in the provision of vocational and other rehabilitation services to persons with disabilities, especially those individuals with severe disabilities, through planning and conducting of research and demonstration projects, and specialized research activities. In addition, this program is designed to assist in the development of solutions to the problems encountered by individuals with disabilities in their daily activities, especially problems related to employment (see 34 CFR 351.1). Under the regulations for this program (see 34 CFR 351.32), the Secretary may establish research priorities by reserving

funds to support the research activities listed in 34 CFR 351.10.

These final priorities support the National Education Goals, one of which states that every American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

On October 7, 1994, the Secretary published a notice of proposed priorities in the **Federal Register** (59 FR 51326).

The Department of Education received thirty-five letters commenting on the proposed priorities. Modifications were made to the priorities as a result of those comments. The comments, and the Secretary's responses, are discussed in an appendix to this notice.

Note: This notice of final priorities does not solicit applications. A notice inviting applications in the areas of accommodations for individuals with disabilities in adult education programs and HIV/AIDS and disability is published in a separate notice in this issue of the **Federal Register**. At this time, NIDRR is not inviting applications in the area of reproductive issues for women with disabilities.

Priorities

Under 34 CFR 75.105(c)(3) the Secretary gives an absolute preference to applications that meet one of the following priorities. The Secretary will fund under this program only applications that meet one of these absolute priorities:

*Priority 1: Accommodations for Individuals With Disabilities in Adult Education Programs***Background**

In program year 1991 Adult Education (AE) programs funded under the Adult Education Act (P.L. 88–452, as amended) served over 3.7 million people in adult basic, adult secondary, and English-as-a-second-language programs. Adult Basic Education programs serve persons who are educationally disadvantaged, including individuals with all types of disabilities. The Office of Vocational and Adult Education estimates that at least 30 percent of the persons in AE programs have a disability. Adults (aged 16 years or older) with disabilities are enrolled in AE programs located in 57 States or territories in local educational agencies, community colleges, community-based organizations, mental hospitals, rehabilitation and correctional facilities, and other facilities serving individuals with disabilities (U.S. Department of Education, Adult Learning and Literacy

Clearinghouse, Fact Sheet 9, February 1994).

Some individuals with disabilities in AE programs may need accommodations to make the educational program accessible. These accommodations may involve the modification of policies, practices, or procedures, or the provision of auxiliary aids and services (e.g., relaxed time requirements for tests, interpreters, assistive technology) or both. Published efforts to identify accommodations for adults with disabilities in AE programs have focused on administering tests and diagnostic assessments (American Council on Education, "GED Test Accommodations," Washington, D.C., 1990; American Council on Education, "External Diploma Program Assessment Accommodations and Modifications for Adults with Special Learning Needs," Washington, D.C., 1990).

In addition to testing and assessment accommodations, individuals with disabilities in AE programs may require accommodations related to the presentation of instructional materials, alternative formats to print materials, notetakers, alternatives to written assignments, practicums, scheduling, and a variety of other educational tasks and requirements.

Adult Education administrators and teachers need to understand not only their obligations under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, as amended, and the Americans with Disabilities Act, but also the resources that are available to enable them to provide the accommodations. Similarly, students with disabilities in AE programs need to understand their rights, articulate their needs, and identify the accommodations that will assist them to meet the program's requirements.

Priority

An R&D project on accommodations for individuals with disabilities in Adult Education programs shall—

- Survey the nature and extent to which a representative sample of AE programs are providing programmatic accommodations to students with disabilities and determine the relationship between the provision of those accommodations and program outcomes for those students (e.g., graduation rates, program completion, career advancement, etc.);
- Identify and evaluate effective programmatic accommodations for individuals with disabilities in AE programs, and develop recommendations for the development of new accommodations, including, but not limited to, accommodations related to testing, presentation of instructional