

*Priority 2: Reproductive Issues for Women With Physical Disabilities*

*Comment:* One commenter recommended using the term "reproductive health" instead of "pregnancy and childbirth" in the third and fifth activities of the priority. The commenter pointed out that there are many women with disabilities who have reproductive health needs other than those related to pregnancy and childbirth.

*Discussion:* The Secretary recognizes that "pregnancy and childbirth" are a subset of the topics that fall under the heading of "reproductive health." The Secretary believes that all applicants for this project should address issues of childbirth and pregnancy. Additionally, the Secretary believes that applicants should be given the discretion to propose to address other issues of "reproductive health." The application review process will determine the merits of the activities that an applicant proposes.

*Changes:* The background statement and the priority have been revised to provide applicants with the discretion to propose to address issues of reproductive health in addition to childbirth and pregnancy.

*Comment:* Many commenters recommended adding specific emphases and activities to the priority.

*Discussion:* The Secretary believes that applicants should have the discretion to propose any emphasis or activity that is authorized by the priority. The application review process will determine the merits of the emphasis or activity that an applicant proposes. The Secretary believes that the commenters' recommendations listed directly below are authorized by the priority and may be proposed by an applicant. However, the Secretary declines to require all applicants to address them. These recommended emphases and activities are as follows: study impact and risks of hormone treatment, develop demographic data by age and disability on childbirth and pregnancy, evaluate risks and efficacy of birth control methods, address issues surrounding estrogens as sex steroids used in contraception and menopause, identify and evaluate methods to improve decision-making about reproductive health care by women with disabilities, address issues pertinent to culturally diverse populations, identify and evaluate postnatal adaptations to maximize parenting skills in women with disabilities, and identify and evaluate strategies that address physical and programmatic access issues to health care as it pertains to pregnancy.

*Changes:* None.

*Comment:* One commenter recommended that the project should be funded by the National Institutes of Health.

*Discussion:* NIDRR has collaborated with various units of the National Institutes of Health in planning research on women with disabilities, including reproduction research. NIDRR has the authority to support research on reproductive care, including research on promoting sensitivity to disability concerns, educating consumers and providers on treatment approaches, service delivery, and consumer empowerment.

*Changes:* None.

*Comment:* Twelve commenters indicated that the priority was too narrow. The commenters recommended that the priority be expanded to address a wide range of issues in addition to reproductive issues. The commenters recommended that the priority be expanded to address: access to basic health care, violence, abuse, employment, housing, education, and independent living. Ten of the commenters recommended that NIDRR support a Rehabilitation Research and Training Center (RRTC) on women.

*Discussion:* NIDRR recently convened a focus group on the topic of women with disabilities. The Secretary recognizes that there are many issues related to women with disabilities that warrant further research. The Secretary plans to consider supporting this research in the near future. However, at this time, the Secretary declines to expand the priority as recommended by the commenters, in favor of retaining a discrete focus for this R&D project.

*Changes:* None.

*Comment:* One commenter recommended that the title of the priority be changed to "Access to Health Care and Reproductive Issues for Women with Disabilities."

*Discussion:* The Secretary believes that the commenter's recommendation connotes a different scope of activity than is intended for the priority. For example, the proposed priority was not intended to study issues of financing of health care (a topic implied by the suggested title).

*Changes:* None.

*Comment:* Three commenters recommended expanding the priority to include women with cognitive or psychiatric disabilities.

*Discussion:* The Secretary recognizes that there are important reproductive health issues confronted by women with cognitive and psychiatric disabilities. The Secretary does not believe it is feasible to address these research issues

in this priority because of the limited resources available to the R&D project. The Secretary is considering plans to address these research issues in the near future.

*Changes:* None.

*Comment:* Two commenters recommended that the project include women of color.

*Discussion:* The Secretary expects this project to include women of color. The statute requires that each applicant for a project under this competition must demonstrate how its application will address the needs of individuals from minority backgrounds who have disabilities. In addition, the selection criteria for the program evaluate how the applicant will include women and members of racial or ethnic minority groups, as well as persons with disabilities and the elderly. The Secretary does not believe any further requirements are necessary in order to ensure that this project will address the commenters' recommendation.

*Changes:* None.

*Priority 3: HIV/AIDS and Disability*

*Comment:* One commenter recommended that the National Association of Protection and Advocacy Systems (NAPAS) be included in the list of groups that will receive the project's findings.

*Discussion:* The Secretary believes that providing NAPAS with project's findings will enhance its dissemination activities.

*Changes:* NAPAS has been added to the list of groups that will receive the project's findings.

*Comment:* Many commenters recommended adding specific emphases and activities to the priority.

*Discussion:* The Secretary believes that applicants should have the discretion to propose any emphasis or activity that is authorized by the priority. The application review process will determine the merits of the emphasis or activity that an applicant proposes. The Secretary believes that the commenters' recommendations listed directly below are authorized by the priority and may be proposed by an applicant. However, the Secretary declines to require all applicants to address them. These recommended emphases and activities are as follows: study physical barriers as well as attitudinal barriers, study housing issues, study the relationship between HIV/AIDS and other disabilities, study the attitudes of service providers when addressing societal barriers, study self-help and consumer-driven approaches in best practices, in addition to studying rehabilitation organizations, identify