

**NOTICE TO ALL APPLICANTS:  
EQUITY FOR STUDENTS, EDUCATORS, AND OTHER PROGRAM  
BENEFICIARIES**

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) ([20 U.S.C. 1228a](#)) applies to applicants for grant awards under this program.

**ALL APPLICANTS FOR NEW GRANT AWARDS MUST INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IN THEIR APPLICATIONS TO ADDRESS THIS PROVISION IN ORDER TO RECEIVE FUNDING UNDER THIS PROGRAM.**

Please respond to the following requests for information:

- 1. Describe how your entity's existing mission, policies, or commitments ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, the proposed project or activity.**

*The mission of the New Jersey Early Intervention System is "to enhance the capacity of families to meet the developmental and health-related needs of children birth to age three who have delays or disabilities by providing quality services and support to families and their children. Families from diverse racial, cultural and socio-economic backgrounds will be involved in decision-making at every level of the design, implementation and evaluation of the Early Intervention System."*

The New Jersey Early Intervention System (NJEIS) adheres to the provisions of 34 CRF 303.111 (Child Find) and has activities in place to identify locate and evaluate all children with disabilities residing in the state, including those who are homeless or wards of the state. Four Regional Early Intervention Collaboratives, under a grant from the Lead Agency, develop and implement Child Find activities, often in conjunction with the state Parent Training and Information Center (PTI). Using the data reported in the Annual Performance Report in Indicator 5 (children served who are birth to 1 year old) and Indicator 6 (children served who are birth to 3 years old), the Regional Collaborative Family Support Specialists devise a yearly Child Find plan based on in-depth analysis of the data by county and race/ethnicity to identify where targeted initiatives are needed. Activities include general publicity events and materials, intensive work with referral sources such as medical homes and Child Protective Services, and engagement of local community resources with connections to infants and toddlers.

NJEIS collects family fees as part of the System of Payments for Part C. The System of Payments policy is in writing, available to families and the public in multiple languages and articulates the provisions of 34 CFR 303.521 (System of Payment and Fees). The policy provides assurances that all families can access services, regardless of their ability to pay, and has an approved definition of "ability to pay". The System of Payment assures families of their right to specific services at public expense such as service coordination, evaluation/assessment, development of an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), and procedural safeguards.

The Lead Agency has operational supports in place to assure families can receive their services and information pertaining to their child in their native language, consistent with 34 CFR 303.25 (Native Language). These supports include the availability of interpreters for all services, evaluations and meetings (including sign language), and written translation (including Braille) of child specific documents (evaluations, IFSPs, consent forms etc.)

**2. Based on your proposed project or activity, what barriers may impede equitable access and participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries?**

The state is most concerned for a shortage of practitioners to meet the increased number of children referred to the Part C program in the past year. The instability of the workforce is a barrier to general access to the system across the state. The statewide turnover rate for NJEIS practitioners is 15%, as calculated in the *Cost Study for the Provision of Early Intervention Services* completed in 2022. Current data indicates, however that areas which are more rural have the greatest barrier for access. The decrease in the number of available practitioners alongside the increase in number of eligible children can be a barrier for the system to meet all the identified services on an IFSP.

**3. Based on the barriers identified, what steps will you take to address such barriers to equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity?**

The NJEIS has completed a *Cost Study for the Provision of Early Intervention Services* that provides updated data and information on the overall fiscal and operational barriers for provider agencies to ensure equitable access to services. The Lead Agency will be further analyzing the results of the Cost Study for ways to support the recruitment and retention of qualified providers with a focus on the areas with the highest need. This past fiscal year, the State leveraged available funds from the American Rescue Plan Act to provide fiscal support directly to practitioners to offset high fuel costs and incentivize participation in professional development as part of overall retention activities. Further, the American Rescue Plan Act funds supported recruitment actions for provider agencies and allotted agencies funding for upgrading technology.

The provision of services through Telehealth is a key part of the State's plan to assure equitable access. The State makes available to families any needed technology (tablets) or other supports (data plans) that are needed for the child to access and receive Part C services via Telehealth.

**4. What is your timeline, including targeted milestones, for addressing these identified barriers?**

The Lead Agency has identified the next 12 months as the timeline for reducing the barriers to services resulting from a shortage of practitioners. The Lead Agency will utilize the resources of consultants from outside of the NJEIS as thought partners on addressing specific workforce and operational barriers. In addition to families, the Lead Agency plans to engage with non-traditional Part C partners, those with expertise in healthcare financing, labor laws, human resources, and public policy to identify sustainable solutions. The two major targeted milestones are 1) reducing the number of children waiting for a service and a measurable decrease in the turnover rate in the workforce.

**Notes:**

1. Applicants are not required to have mission statements or policies that align with equity in order to submit an application.
2. Applicants may identify any barriers that may impede equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity, including, but not limited to, barriers based on economic disadvantage, gender, race, ethnicity, color, national origin, disability, age, language, migrant

status, rural status, homeless status or housing insecurity, pregnancy, parenting, or caregiving status, and sexual orientation.

3. Applicants may have already included some or all of this required information in the narrative sections of their applications or their State Plans. In responding to this requirement, for each question, applicants may provide a cross-reference to the section(s) and page number(s) in their applications or State Plans that includes the information responsive to that question on this form or may restate that information on this form.

#### **Paperwork Burden Statement**

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless such collection displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 1894-0005. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 3 hours per response, including time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering, and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. The obligation to respond to this collection is required to obtain or retain a benefit. If you have any comments concerning the accuracy of the time estimate or suggestions for improving this individual collection, send your comments to [ICDocketMgr@ed.gov](mailto:ICDocketMgr@ed.gov) and reference OMB Control Number 1894-0005. All other comments or concerns regarding the status of your individual form may be addressed to either (a) the person listed in the FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT section in the competition Notice Inviting Applications, or (b) your assigned program officer.