

**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 Puerto Rico Department of Health has the mission “to design and implement public health policies and strategies to promote, evaluate and achieve healthy communities holistically considering the people living in the island and all the factors that affect their health. The Department also holds as its core principles to promote continuous improvement, health equity, evidenced-based practices, governance, and the right of all people to lead a healthy life. The lead agency’s strategic plan for the years 2020-2025 has five priorities which include health equity, governance and health informatics, emergency response, organizational sustainability and, quality and public health results. The Puerto Rico Department of Health’s mission, principles and priorities are aligned with the objective of ensuring equitable access to Part C services for all infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families in Puerto Rico. The Puerto Rico Early Intervention Program is advised by and works with its State Interagency Coordinating Council to identify and address any barriers. The IDEA Part C program provides orientation to participants on their rights and the non- discriminatory policy. Our regional sites comply with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and IDEA Part C regulations to ensure that infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families in all regions of Puerto Rico have access to all Part C services; know their rights; and understand procedures to address any concerns and complaints. Puerto Rico ensures that the Part C program is part of a State wide system of early intervention services, and provides an environment free from discrimination and harassment based upon gender, race/ethnicity, national origin, color, disability or age.

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

The Puerto Rico Part C Program provides an environment free of discrimination and harassment based upon gender, race/ethnicity, national origin, color, disability or age. Nevertheless, for the past several years, Puerto Rico has been facing a decline in the number of service providers available to serve infants and toddlers with developmental delays and their families on the island, and this has worsened due to the

COVID-19 pandemic. This personnel shortage constitutes a challenge for jurisdiction that may affect families living in rural areas more than those living in urban areas. Hence, a barrier that may impede equitable access to Part C services is rural status.

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?

Puerto Rico is strongly committed to equal access and treatment for all infants and toddlers and their families who are referred to, and served in, the Part C program, as well as to the early intervention service providers and the general population. Therefore, the Program has been actively collaborating with the private entities that contract service providers to discuss challenges and support their efforts for identifying, recruiting and retaining personnel. Additionally, the jurisdiction has been identifying and hiring new service providers, with special attention to these areas. Also, the Program continues with its practices of ensuring that families know their rights and understand procedures to address any concerns and complaints. Other steps to continue to ensure equitable access include the strengthening of child find efforts by developing new agreements with other programs for referrals and actively using the CDC's Learn the Signs, Act Early campaign for educating families on their child's development to promote early identification.

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

Puerto Rico is actively addressing this barrier by identifying and recruiting new service providers. Federal Fiscal Year 2023-2024 will see an increase in the number of service providers contracted directly by the lead agency to continue serving infants and toddlers with disabilities in Puerto Rico, especially those that reside in areas that may be disproportionately affected by personnel shortages.

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 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.