

*Proposed Fiscal Year 1995 Priority Area 3: First Jobs—Introducing Young Persons With/Without Developmental Disabilities to the World of Work and Community Service*

Nationally, the employment outlook for young Americans with developmental disabilities is bleak. Some progress has been made in supporting individuals with significant disabilities in real jobs, but the following facts speak for themselves: only about 10 percent of students with developmental disabilities graduating from school go on to competitive or supported employment; only about one-half of individuals with developmental disabilities surveyed indicated they had any choice in what job they held; and 90 cents of every Federal dollar, and 80 cents of every State dollar, spent on providing services to individuals with developmental disabilities during the day is spent on keeping individuals in segregated, nonproductive settings.

The cultural change that needs to occur is a redirection of the efforts of service providers and a shifting of focus onto the abilities and skills of individuals with disabilities. First-time job support can result from partnerships with young people without disabilities. This emphasis on inclusion provides mutual benefit as young people in their first community service or employment experiences benefit from the resources of diversity.

ADD is proposing to fund research and demonstration projects that develop strategies for first jobs that will lead to second jobs and ultimate career paths. Research should include assessments of current practices and of necessary supports, such as transportation, adaptive technology, and personal assistance services.

Collaborative linkages among service/support providers should be explored as well as matches with individuals with developmental disabilities and those without disabilities in job settings. Strategies for success should include consumer choice and empowerment as essential approaches in the development and implementation of projects that will be culturally competent, ongoing, and have measurable outcomes.

ADD is particularly interested in collaborative projects including State Welfare/JOBS programs, the AmeriCorps program of the Corporation for National and Community Service, and other private nonprofit agencies and organizations that would be able to establish ongoing working relationships with Head Start, Vocational Rehabilitation, the Job Training

Partnership Act program, and other relevant community resources. Every effort will be made to coordinate the activities under this priority area with the Office of Family Assistance and other Federal agencies such as the Social Security Administration.

*Proposed Fiscal Year 1995 Priority Area 4: Child Care and Early Intervention: Linkages for Successful Inclusion of Young Children With Disabilities*

The Administration on Developmental Disabilities is interested in funding projects which will increase the capacity of child care and development programs to meet the needs of young children with disabilities. Child care services need to be included among the essential partner agencies in the provision of early, continuous, intensive and comprehensive child development and family support services to children with disabilities and their families. The primary goals of projects to consider would be increasing access to quality child care services for children with disabilities birth through age 5 and increasing the delivery of early intervention and related services to children in natural and inclusive environments.

Although inclusion of children with disabilities within child care is not a new occurrence, few formal mechanisms support effective coordination between the child care and disability communities. These systems remain separate and apart even as they are called upon to provide services to the same children and families. Families of young children with disabilities continue to rank child care among the highest of their unmet needs and early findings of the Part H Early Intervention Program for infants and toddlers show no significant number of young children receiving these services within child care or other natural environments outside the home.

Access to quality child care services for children with disabilities was significantly strengthened and is protected by the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act in July 1992. The ADA explicitly prohibits discrimination of children with disabilities in public and private child care settings. The Act describes the protections available to children with disabilities and their families and also describes the child care providers' legal responsibility and required steps to make accommodations which ensure access and opportunities for full participation.

While the ADA opens many doors and provides the legal protections to

assure access to children with disabilities, this prohibition of discrimination, in and of itself, is limited in its ability to increase the capacity of child care programs to successfully include children with disabilities. Even when providers understand their obligations under the ADA, they continue to need ongoing access to training, technical assistance, mentorship, and consultation to implement meaningful and inclusionary policies and programs.

Furthermore, the linkages between childhood disability and poverty have long gone unnoticed and unaddressed. The number of children with disabilities living in poverty is significant. Their needs, as well as those of their parents, for quality child care are great. Nearly 8 percent of children on AFDC have disabilities. Without intervention and support, children in poverty are also at risk for disability.

New approaches to strengthening America's families and providing services to its youngest and most vulnerable children require the commitment and combined effort of multiple delivery systems. The foundation for collaborative approaches is evident in recent Federal legislation addressing the needs of children and families.

ADD is particularly interested in local and Statewide projects that promote a seamless interagency approach to better serve children with disabilities, and especially those children with disabilities who live in poverty. To develop child care services which are responsive to the needs of young children with disabilities and their families, the protections of the ADA must be joined with best practices in the field of early childhood education, early intervention, and family support services. Projects should address the significant training needs of the child care community, providers, and parents of children with disabilities regarding the ADA and its protections and obligations.

Projects should identify or develop strategies and mechanisms which support and expand training opportunities across systems. Strategies should encourage the sharing of resources and expertise, as well as establishing opportunities for ongoing mentorship and technical assistance.

Overall, formal and informal linkages developed through these projects should increase the knowledge, awareness, and access to resources and services among families, child care providers, early childhood educators, disability service providers, and others who work with