

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.

First Connections' Mission and Key Principles "to collaborate with families to facilitate the child's participation in family and community activities through early intervention linked to specific family-centered goals" sets the tone for respecting cultural diversity in a program whose goal is to provide *all* families with the support and resources they need to enhance their child's early learning and development. The Program has a mechanism for dispersing Federal Part C funding to local EI providers Statewide to support all program-eligible children and their families. The Program's OSEP-approved Policies and Procedures outline Payor of Last Resort requirements to ensure that Federal funding supports program-eligible children who have no other pay source.

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

One identified barrier to accessing and participating in early intervention in the Marshallese and Indigenous/Native American communities includes cultural differences in understanding of and acceptance of disabilities. An identified barrier to accessing early intervention among undocumented families is a fear of being identified, despite there being no requirement for children under 3 to have documentation to receive early intervention services.

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 program makes use of Interpreter services as needed to support parent participation in early intervention, SICC meetings, etc. First Connections collaborates with the Marshallese Networking and Marshallese Interpreting for Community Inclusion (MICI) projects to ensure that EI Professionals have the knowledge and skills to collaborate with Marshallese families in culturally sensitive ways that respect autonomy. The Program collaborates with various other agencies, Departments, and programs across the State to conduct ongoing Child Find activities to ensure that all children suspected of a developmental delay are referred for early intervention and public outreach to provide free developmental screenings to parents in attendance and develop relationships with communities. The Program makes use of a Family Engagement Specialist whose goal is to increase the number of public outreach events to build relationships with

families and communities. A Program goal is to contract with an Equity Specialist to conduct “Minority Outreach” via regional parent meetings to engage families whose primary language is not English to identify barriers to participation in early intervention as well as program strengths and needs to make recommendations to the Lead Agency.

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

By the end of 2023, the Family Engagement Specialist will conduct at least 2 public outreach events per month to build relationships in communities with under-served populations. First Connections will continue collaboration with MICI, the Minority Health Commission, and other related agencies in conducting ongoing Child Find activities targeted to under-represented populations with a goal of increasing the number of referrals within these demographic groups annually. The Program hopes to contract with an Equity Specialist to conduct at least 4 regional parent meetings by the end of 2024, but this strategy to engage families in identifying barriers and proposing solutions to equitable access and participation is dependent on internal approval within the Lead Agency.

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.