

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 CNMI PSS Students First motto aligns with its mission of *educating lifelong learners to become productive citizens of a global society*. This educational commitment to all learners is seen through equitable access to and equitable participation in all aspects of the system:

- For students, all students are general education students. CNMI PSS curricula, instruction, and assessment infrastructure systems support all students to be educated as lifelong learners. For students with disabilities, CNMI PSS ensures all children with disabilities are located, identified, and provided a free, appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE) that prepares them for future education, employment and independent living through special education and related services and support. PSS has in place the procedures that align with the IDEA requirements for special education and related services.
 - For personnel, including teachers, PSS is an equal opportunity employer. A statement of non-discrimination appears on all employment applications distributed by PSS and posted on the PSS website: <https://cnmipss.org/human-resources>.
 - For parents and families, PSS has established the Parent Advisory Council (PAC), a system-wide parent advisory group composed of parents from each of the 20 PSS schools, the Head Start Policy Council, and the Special Education State Advisory Panel (SESAP). The purpose for the council is to advise and assist the Commissioner of Education in identifying unmet needs in relation to student education, academic progress, and academic achievement.
2. Based on your proposed project or activity, what barriers may impede equitable access and participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries?

Barriers include: (1) active parent involvement & engagement, (2) post-secondary school opportunities.

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?

- (1) Active parent involvement & engagement: The PSS PAC, which includes a representative from SESAP, the main advisory group for special education, is a key system-wide improvement outreach effort to promote parent involvement and engagement. In addition, continued collaboration with the CNMI Parent Training and Information (PTI) program out of the Division of Youth Services will support increasing parent engagement in awareness and training activities.
- (2) Post-secondary opportunities: The PSS Cooperative Education Program (CO-OP) facilitates interagency community activities for continued partnership with government agencies responsible for employment/job skills training and independent living, college and trade school. In addition, the CNMI scholarship program will be explored as a potential funding resource for high school graduates who wish to pursue post-secondary education opportunities.

4. What is your timeline, including targeted milestones, for addressing these identified barriers? Initiatives are currently in place for addressing the two identified barriers. With the revival of the PSS PAC two years ago, the Special Education Program has been included in quarterly meetings and annual Parent Summits. There is active collaboration with the CNMI PTI activities, as well as partnership government interagency community outreach, activities, and conferences through the Disabilities Network Partners (DNP) held throughout the year.

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.