**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](https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/USCODE-2020-title20/html/USCODE-2020-title20-chap31-subchapII-part2-sec1228a.htm)) 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.

Maine’s Part C program is highly committed to providing high quality, evidence-based early intervention services to each and every eligible infant/toddler and their family. As part of Maine’s ongoing efforts to find as many eligible infants/toddlers as possible, at the earliest age possible,

a statewide outreach plan was developed and implemented in January of 2021, and has continued to be implemented each year thereafter, to ensure that all primary referral sources receive education about Part C on an annual basis. Examples of other activities that have been conducted to further expand Maine’s child find system include targeted outreach based on ongoing analysis of state and local referral data, creation of new referral pathways for infants and toddlers with established conditions of risk and/or concerns for development, and cross-department collaborations to increase community awareness of Part C and, subsequently, help connect an increased number of infants and toddlers with Maine’s early intervention program. In addition, a significant portion of the funds allocated to Maine’s Part C program through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) were budgeted for activities geared towards improving Maine’s child find system and comprehensive system of personnel development to ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, Maine’s early intervention program.

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

Analysis of Maine’s current and historical child find, family outcomes, and state systemic improvement plan (SSIP) data has identified that primary language, geographic location, and age of the child (e.g., birth to one) may impede equitable access and participation in Maine’s Part C program.

1. 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?

All of the written materials used within Maine’s Part C program have been translated into the top ten primary languages spoken by families of infants/toddlers enrolled in Part C including Arabic, Chinese, French, Kinyarwanda, Lingala, Portuguese, Somali, Spanish, Swahili, and Vietnamese. Culture grahams have also been made available to Part C staff and contracted providers as a tool for educating themselves on different cultures, and several of Maine’s regional early intervention programs are exploring partnerships with cultural brokers to identify strategies that can used to help increase the participation of families from diverse cultural backgrounds following referral to Part C. Additionally, professional development on cultural competency and implicit bias will be provided to all of Maine’s Part C staff and providers.

In addition to the efforts described above, Maine has secured a staffing contract with a Strategic Initiatives and Special Projects Manager who has been assigned the following responsibilities: providing education and training to a variety of birthing hospitals, medical providers, and other community partners about established conditions of risk that make children under age 3 automatically eligible for Part C; collaborating with early intervention program managers at each local Part C program to develop and implement targeted outreach based on regional referral and enrollment data; and coordinating a rebranding/marketing campaign for Maine’s early intervention program. Maine’s Part C Coordinator will continue to collaborate with various statewide referral systems (e.g., Help Me Grow, CradleME, and Maine’s Plan of Safe Care) to ensure that all potentially eligible infants/toddlers and their families have an accessible referral pathway to Maine’s early intervention program. Lastly, Maine has requested intensive technical assistance from the Early Childhood Personnel Center (ECPC) to further develop its comprehensive system of personnel development (CSPD) and, as a result, improve the quantity, quality, and effectiveness of Maine’s workforce who provide services and interventions to facilitate the development and learning of all eligible infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families.

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

Partnerships with cultural brokers to identify strategies that can used to help increase the participation of families from diverse cultural backgrounds following referral to Part C will continue to be explored throughout the reporting period for FFY 2022 (July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023). Professional development on cultural competency and implicit bias will be provided to all of Maine’s Part C staff and providers by September 30, 2023. The child find and outreach responsibilities assigned to the Strategic Initiatives and Special Projects Manager will also be completed by September 30, 2023, with ongoing implementation of targeted outreach continued at the regional level throughout the remainder of the FFY 2023 reporting period. Given intensive technical assistance (TA) from the Early Childhood Personnel Center (ECPC), Maine will complete all 4 phases (e.g., exploration, installation, implementation, and standardization) of developing a CSPD by 04/15/2024. This includes the following targeted milestones: Given TA support from ECPC, Maine will (1) complete the exploration phase of developing a CSPD within 4 months; (2) complete the installation phase of developing a CSPD within 6 months; (3) complete the implementation phase of developing a CSPD within 17 months; and (4) complete the standardization phase of developing a CSPD within 18 months.

**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.