

# REMARKS

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## **UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO SYSTEM**

**COLEMAN INSTITUTE FOR COGNITIVE DISABILITIES' FIFTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE:**

*Enhancing the Quality of Life for People with Cognitive Disabilities Through Technology — "What's Happening in Washington?"*

Hilton Denver Tech South  
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First, I'd like to thank David Braddock for the invitation to be here today, and it is great to see many friends such as Bill and Claudia Coleman, Betsy Hoffman, Allan Bergman and Madeleine Will, just to name a few.

Let's start this update from Washington with the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR). The federal fiscal year ended on September 30th. All NIDRR grant awards were completed. The most important of these awards to this audience is the new Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center (RERC) on Cognitive Technologies, led by Cathy Bodine (highlight abstract given below). We're very happy to have you as part of the NIDRR RERC family.

Before we move on, I would like to give credit to President Bush for recognizing the potential of the RERC program and for securing new funding for the program in his New Freedom Initiative. As many of you know, President Bush announced the New Freedom Initiative only ten days after taking office. Over the past three and a half years, the New Freedom Initiative has guided improvements in education, employment and community living for people with disabilities. The development and acquisition of assistive technology is one of the primary goals of the

New Freedom Initiative and NIDRR has benefited from this focus through increases in research funding and in funding for the Interagency Committee on Disability Research.

As you begin the work of the RERC, here are some recommendations I'd like to pass on to you that have emerged from past experiences of other NIDRR RERCs:

- Use this RERC to involve other faculty at the University of Colorado System in this line of research. Cooperation can often lead to other faculty developing informal relations with the new RERC, and submitting proposal to other agencies (such as NIH or NSF) for related research projects.
- Think about spinning off a small company so you can apply for Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) Program support.
- Get to know other NIDRR RERCs and look for opportunities to collaborate.

This line of research is very important to NIDRR, and to individuals with cognitive disabilities. NIDRR has been one of the leading agencies in supporting research for people with cognitive disabilities.

NIDRR has also been working with OSERS' Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) on transition and self-determination. We recognize the importance of employment to young people of all abilities and are interested in determining the factors that lead young people to successful transition into postsecondary education and employment. By partnering with OSEP, we hope to establish models that work for young people by specific disability, including cognitive disability, that will help them learn self-determination skills.

As some of you may know, I also serve as chair of the Interagency Committee on Disability Research (ICDR). The President's Committee for People with Intellectual Disabilities (PCPID) is a member of the ICDR. I look forward to strengthening our collaboration and that with other ICDR member agencies to move the research agenda in cognitive disabilities forward.

Finally, the first meeting of the Interagency Coordinating Council on Emergency Preparedness and Individuals with Disabilities took place on September 20, 2004, at the Department of Homeland Security. At the meeting, several senior government officials shared reports regarding significant new policy initiatives that will better integrate people with disabilities in the emergency preparedness effort. President Bush established the Council by an Executive Order issued on July 22, 2004. The President expanded on his New Freedom Initiative, a series of policies designed to advance the interests of people with disabilities, by directing the federal government to address the safety and security needs of people with disabilities. The National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR) has committed close to \$1 million to emergency preparedness research. Areas of research include the development of a Web-based software program that assists people who are deaf or hard of hearing in learning emergency preparedness skills; and a research project to improve the exit/egress of individuals with disabilities from buildings and other settings in emergencies. NIDRR will continue to expand its research in this area and will host a two-day conference on October 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> on these issues. In addition, OSERS' Rehabilitative Services Administration (RSA) has awarded \$1 million to the National Organization on Disability's Emergency Preparedness Initiative to assist communities, governments and federal agencies in developing plans that will ensure the safety and security of people with disabilities in emergencies.

I look forward to meeting as many of you as possible during this conference. Thank you and I would be happy to answer any questions.

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