

Correspondence



***ACF-IM-HS-22-05 Office of
Head Start Guidance for Use of
Funds Appropriated in the
American Rescue Plan Act of
2021***

ACF Administration for Children and Families	U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES	
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INFORMATION MEMORANDUM

TO: Head Start American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act Grant Recipients

SUBJECT: Office of Head Start Guidance for Use of Funds Appropriated in the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARP) (Pub. L. 117-2); Accompaniment to ACF-IOAS-DCL-22-01

INSTRUCTION:

The purpose of this Information Memorandum (IM) is to provide an overview and guidance on funds made available through the ARP.

President Biden signed Public Law 117-2, the American Rescue Plan Act, 2021 (ARP), into law on March 11, 2021. The \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan includes \$1 billion for Head Start programs.

All Head Start, Early Head Start, and Early Head Start-Child Care (EHS-CC) Partnership grant recipients are eligible to receive additional funds proportionally based on funded enrollment levels.

When combined with the \$750 million in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act and the \$250 million in supplemental funds in the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CRRSA) Act, the Head Start program has received a total of \$2 billion in additional funding to support staff, children, and families during this unprecedented time.

ARP funds must be obligated by September 30, 2022, including for federal administrative expenses.

Guidance

Grant recipients have flexibility to determine which one-time investments best supports the needs of staff, children, and families, while adhering to federal, state, and local guidance. In making these determinations, grant recipients should consider how the use of the one-time funds

could meet both short- and long-term needs and determine whether purchasing, leasing, or contracting for services is more prudent.

Uses of funding include, but are not limited to, the following, as specified in [ACF-PI-HS-21-03 FY 2021 American Rescue Plan Funding Increase for Head Start Programs](#):

Reach More Families

Enrollment and recruitment. Now is the time to focus on re-enrollment and enrolling new families. Programs can use funds to purchase services, materials, and technology to ramp up recruitment and enrollment efforts so that, as a program, you are able to enroll the eligible children and families in your community.

Additional weeks of Head Start or Early Head Start programming. Extending the program year or offering summer programming to increase the time children and families receive services.

Family supports. Addressing families' economic security by partnering with them on employment, education, and career goals. Investing in the development of partnerships with local community colleges, apprenticeship programs, and local employers committed to helping Head Start and Early Head Start families find meaningful employment and career tracks. Assessing families' nutritional, health, and wellness needs more frequently. Ensuring materials and resources are available in languages families understand.

Mental health support for children and families. Employing additional family service workers and mental health consultants to assist families with adverse circumstances, including families who may be experiencing homelessness.

Provision of meals and snacks not reimbursed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, including purchasing kitchen equipment and supplies to support in-person meal service.

Transportation. Hiring bus drivers and monitors to allow more trips with fewer children per bus. Purchasing buses and other vehicles that support continuity of program service and reaching families most in need of services, including families experiencing homelessness.

Partnerships to increase the inclusion of children with disabilities. Providing more training for teachers and families and more support for families. Remodeling classrooms and playgrounds to be accessible.

Partnerships to increase the enrollment of children experiencing homelessness. Partnering with local shelters and public schools to identify and serve children and families experiencing homelessness.

Addressing unique needs within their communities, such as providing internet access to support extended learning.

Get Facilities Ready for In-person Comprehensive Services

Ventilation to reduce risk of indoor transmission and make facilities safer. Installing new heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems or other improvements, such as windows that can open with safety measures to prevent falls.

Outdoor learning and play. Purchasing or enhancing outdoor learning spaces, including nature-based learning and outdoor classrooms. Creating play areas and landscape features that promote exploration and discovery in a natural environment, such as plantings, gardens, and “loose parts” (i.e., materials for construction and pretend play), rather than traditional play structures or playgrounds.

Cleaning supplies and services. Purchasing necessary supplies or contracting services to clean and disinfect facilities and vehicles.

Renovations or other space modification. Converting available space into classrooms, modifying current classroom designs with room dividers, or adding well-ventilated modular classrooms.

Additional space. Renting additional classroom space, due to physical distancing, to increase opportunities for more children to return to in-person services. Contracting for slots with child care providers in center-based or family child care settings to deliver comprehensive services.

Other locally determined facility, staff, and equipment or partnership actions that are necessary to safely resume and maintain full in-person program operations.

Support Head Start Employees

Planning sessions for staff. Preparing for a return to in-person comprehensive services starts by ensuring that everyone has the knowledge, skills, and resources necessary to operate effectively. This funding can be used to invest in planning sessions to prepare for providing services now and in the summer and fall.

Staff wellness and mental health support. Conducting employee wellness surveys or engaging in other data collection to better understand the needs of team members. Increasing access to mental health consultation and therapy services for staff, contracting with an Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and instituting a staff wellness program that includes activities such as mindfulness breaks and opportunities for self-reflection.

Additional staff. Hiring additional classroom staff to meet physical distancing requirements or reduce group size. Bringing in full-time floaters to reduce the need to bring in outside substitutes.

Professional learning and development for staff. Providing professional learning experiences on key topics such as equity, diversity, inclusion, bias, economic mobility, trauma-skilled practices, and other topics.

Other personnel costs. Offering fringe benefits and expanding sick leave.

Vaccine support. Providing transportation assistance to vaccination sites and temporary coverage to allow absence from the workplace for vaccination. Offering paid time off, sick leave, or other paid leave for the time spent receiving vaccination and if staff members experience side effects post-vaccination.

Additional Resources

- [Staff Development](#)
- [OHS COVID-19 Updates](#)
- [American Rescue Plan](#)

Relevant Resources

- [Enrollment Forward Campaign](#)
- [Prioritizing Staff Wellness](#)
- [Performance Progress Reporting](#)
- [Earned Income Tax Credits, Child Tax Credit, and Free Tax Help FAQs](#)
- [Investing in Families: The American Rescue Plan](#)
- [Emergency Rental Assistance and Housing Vouchers FAQs](#)
- [Resources to Support Families Experiencing Housing Instability](#)
- [Know Your American Rescue Plan Benefits Checklist](#)
- [Chatathon Live Series: American Rescue Plan Benefits](#)
- [Investing with Families Initiative](#)
 - [Social Media Toolkits](#)
- [The American Rescue Plan Benefits for Families Social Media Toolkit](#)
- [Partnering with Families to Access Benefits Through the American Rescue Plan](#)

Information Memoranda

- [ACF-IM-HS-22-03 Head Start Categorical Eligibility for Families Eligible for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program](#)
- [ACF-IM-HS-22-04 Competitive Bonuses for the Head Start Workforce](#)

Program Instructions

- [ACF-PI-HS-21-04 Office of Head Start \(OHS\) Expectations for Head Start Programs in Program Year \(PY\) 2021–2022](#)
- [ACF-PI-HS-21-03 FY 2021 American Rescue Plan Funding Increase for Head Start Programs](#)

Please direct any questions regarding this IM to your Regional Office.

Thank you for your work on behalf of children and families.

/ Katie Hamm /

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