

Correspondence



ACF Administration for Children and Families	U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES	
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PROGRAM INSTRUCTION

TO: Head Start and Early Head Start Programs Impacted by Hurricanes Fiona and Ian

SUBJECT: Hurricanes Fiona and Ian Disaster Recovery Funds

INSTRUCTION:

This Program Instruction (PI) outlines the process to request disaster recovery funds for Head Start and Early Head Start programs, including replacement of damaged or destroyed property and facilities following Hurricanes Fiona and Ian. The PI is also intended to assist governing bodies and key management staff in determining the types of assistance and amount of recovery funds that are needed.

President Biden signed the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 ([H.R. 2617](#)), into law on December 29, 2022. The Act provides \$345,000,000 in emergency funding “for necessary expenses directly related to the consequences of Hurricanes Fiona and Ian, including activities authorized under section 319(a) of the Public Health Service Act.”

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) has the authority to award funds through September 30, 2027 but is subject to end when all funds have been awarded.

The extent of service interruption and damage to properties as a consequence of these disasters varies dramatically. The Office of Head Start (OHS) recognizes we cannot anticipate all of the circumstances in which disaster funds may be needed to ensure services are restored. Disaster recovery needs may not fully reflect how services were delivered prior to the disasters but will be responsive to the current community needs.

OHS reminds grant recipients that even if facilities are inoperable, program staff can support families in meeting their basic needs, including nutrition, health, and mental health support, and alternative care for their children ([ACF-IM-HS-19-01](#)). Programs that have operable facilities are encouraged to allow displaced Head Start families supervised access to those facilities, including kitchens, rest/napping areas, computer labs, bathrooms, laundry, and power sources for recharging phones and other communication devices. Grant recipients are encouraged to support families in accessing local, state, and federal relief and leveraging their community partnerships and resources to support other relief efforts.

Funding Requests

Grant recipients should engage in a comprehensive assessment of programmatic and community needs that considers the immediate, interim, and long-term impacts and associated costs resulting from these disasters. Application narratives must clearly define which of the following categories of funding are included in the request:

1. Facilities
2. Materials, Supplies, and Equipment
3. Program Operations
4. Additional Health, Mental Health, Dental, and Nutrition Services
5. Training and Technical Assistance (TTA)
6. Disaster Recovery Expenses Incurred Prior to Availability of Funds Under the Act

Each proposed grant activity should have a clear timeline for execution and completion. Project completion timelines, including major activities within each phase, need to be clearly stated in the application. We have provided a brief description of each area to assist programs in preparing funding requests.

1. Facilities

Disaster recovery funds may be requested to cover costs associated with repairs, renovations, purchase, and construction of facilities. Requests for funds to cover planning costs, including assessments, architectural and engineering services, and requests for bids may also be submitted. Grant recipients should make a thorough assessment of their temporary and long-term facility needs, including outdoor play areas. Structural damage and environmental problems not properly identified and addressed can create hazards and health risks months after initial damage occurs. We encourage programs to consider obtaining the services of a structural engineer, architect, and environmental consultant during the assessment phase so all costs necessary, such as those for remediation of molds and moisture-related problems, can be identified to ensure full restoration. These funds should be used to make infrastructure improvements and upgrades that promote climate-resilient facilities in the event of future disasters.

Programs should consider the costs of meeting current building codes. All facilities work within the scope of Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS) at [Facilities, 45 CFR §1303 Subpart E](#) must be supported by an application, as required, and all projects must comply with applicable local building regulations, requirements, and codes. Grant recipients must not use requested funds for costs reimbursed by the [Federal Emergency Management Agency \(FEMA\)](#), under a contract for insurance, or by self-insurance.

Please note: ACF grant recipients that purchase, construct, or renovate facilities with Head Start funds are required to submit the SF-429 Real Property Status Report and attachments. As such, in addition to the 1303 application for the disaster recovery funds request, the SF-429-B Request to Acquire, Improve, or Furnish must be submitted in the Online Data Collection system. See [Discretionary Post-Award Requirements, ACF-PI-HS-17-03 Electronic Submission of Real Property Standard Form \(SF\)-429 and Attachments](#), and the applicable administrative requirements at 45 CFR [§75.318](#) and [§75.343](#) for additional information. Also, before a grant

recipient can apply for funds to purchase, construct, or renovate a facility under [45 CFR §1303.44](#), it must establish, among other things, that the proposed purchase, construction, or major renovation is necessary because of a lack of suitable facilities in the grant recipient's service area will inhibit the operation of the program ([45 CFR §1303.42\(a\)\(1\),\(b\)](#)).

2. Materials, Supplies, and Equipment

Some grant recipients have reported losses in materials, supplies, furnishings, and equipment. Programs should conduct a thorough review of each impacted center to ensure funding requests cover all costs necessary to replace lost or damaged vehicles, equipment, materials, furnishings, and supplies. Reviews of program losses should include outdoor play areas, kitchens, program and administrative offices, and any other service areas. Programs may also request vehicles, equipment, materials, furnishings, and supplies needed to support the delivery of temporary services or facilities activities until program services can be fully restored. Equipment purchases as defined in [45 CFR §75.2](#) require prior written approval under [45 CFR §75.308\(c\)\(1\)\(xi\)](#).

3. Program Operations

Some families may have relocated as a consequence of Hurricanes Fiona and Ian. Others remained in their community but may be displaced from their homes. Many more families may be experiencing homelessness than before the hurricanes. Programs should make every effort to assess the immediate and ongoing service needs of communities in their service area.

Programs may consider home-based services, double sessions, and increasing hours per day or days per year to meet community needs. For example, offering double sessions can serve more children on a temporary basis, but longer days and summer services may better meet the continuity needs of children who are experiencing homelessness or in temporary housing. Lowering teacher-child ratios to temporarily increase the number of teachers per classroom may also be needed to safely support evolving program schedules, transitions in services, or to more adequately respond to the needs of children and families who need additional support. Programs should consider the full range of services and supports for families that are necessary to support or supplement program operations, including providing transportation for children if they do not do so already.

4. Additional Health, Mental Health, Dental, and Nutrition Services

Children, families, and staff have endured significant disruption and stress as a result of Hurricanes Fiona and Ian. In some areas, homes may still be without power or safe drinking water. Families may not be able to fully meet their health and nutritional needs under such circumstances. Post-disaster conditions also enhance the risk of infection and the spread of diseases. Programs must consider actions they can take in collaboration with community partners to address health, mental health, dental, and nutritional needs resulting from the disasters. This could include hiring or contracting with qualified practitioners who can work in centers directly with children, families, and staff. Programs may also determine they need to hire additional staff, such as consultants, family workers, or other classroom staff, who can deliver short-term specialized health, mental health, dental, and nutrition services to support recovery post-disaster for children, families, and staff.

5. Training and Technical Assistance (TTA)

OHS recognizes that each program has learned a lot as a result of experiencing recent disasters, including Hurricanes Fiona and Ian. Programs have identified actions and strategies needed to strengthen and build emergency response procedures, staff capacity, facilities, and professional development. This is an opportunity for local programs to collaborate with relief organizations and other early childhood programs in their communities. If requesting TTA funding in accordance with the Head Start Act [Sec. 648\(d\)](#), grant recipients should clearly state the activities for which this funding will be used.

6. Disaster Recovery Expenses Incurred Prior to Availability of Funds Under the Act

OHS provides flexibility for grant recipients to modify their operating budgets to use operating funds to initiate disaster recovery activities. Grant recipients may apply for disaster recovery funds to reimburse the cost of necessary expenses directly related to the consequences of the disasters that were previously paid with operating funds if those funds are needed for current year program operations. Disaster recovery funds paid as reimbursements are not unrestricted funds and must be used for allowable program or disaster recovery expenditures.

When submitting requests for disaster recovery funding, grant recipients must explain how the funds relate to a consequence of the disaster. They also must provide assurance that requested funds will not be used for costs reimbursed by FEMA, under a contract for insurance, or by self-insurance.

Award Information and Restrictions

Eligible grant recipients will receive disaster recovery funds as a separate grant award from their base Head Start and Early Head Start operations grants. Disaster recovery awards are not included in the calculation of a grant recipient's base grant for the subsequent fiscal year. They are also not subject to the allocation requirement of [Sec. 640\(a\)](#) of the Head Start Act. Disaster recovery funds must be awarded by OHS no later than September 30, 2027. During the period of funding availability, grant recipients may request needed disaster recovery funds all at once or make subsequent requests for needed funds.

Unless a waiver has been approved by the Office of Management and Budget and a longer project period is issued for a specific grant by OHS, all disaster recovery funds must be expended by grant recipients within 36 months of their award date. Any funds not expended must be returned to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

If OHS disaster recovery funds are used to fund an eligible expense subsequently paid by FEMA, commercial insurance, or self-insurance, the receipt of proceeds must be reported to OHS and the payment received must be repaid to OHS.

OHS will closely monitor disaster recovery grant awards. Reporting content and frequency requirements will be established by OHS, and on-site visits may be required prior to expenditure of certain funded activities. Financial and programmatic reporting of disaster recovery-funded activities and expenses will be required of all grant recipients.

In addition to all the information included in this PI, grant recipients must also comply with all award terms and conditions.

Submission of Funding Applications

All requests for disaster recovery funding will be made through the Head Start Enterprise System (HSES). First, grant recipients that intend to apply for disaster recovery funding should make a request under the Correspondence tab of their regular grant in HSES for the system to create a temporary grant number. The HSES Help Desk will notify recipients when their temporary grant number has been created. Grant recipients will then submit their requests for disaster recovery funding through the Application tab under this new temporary grant number. Once awarded, the temporary grant will convert to a permanent grant in HSES. Grant recipients are not limited to a single application and may request additional temporary grant numbers if needed.

Disaster recovery funding requests require the following [standard forms](#) and backup documents:

- **SF-424 Application for Federal Assistance**
- **SF-424-A Budget Information—Non-Construction Programs**
- A narrative that describes the proposed use of funds. All activities and projects must identify the relationship to a covered disaster and include a timeline clearly indicating when significant project milestones or activities will be executed or occur and when the overall project or activity will be completed.
- Governing body and Policy Council decision, including meeting minutes.
- If you are requesting funds for major renovation, construction, or purchase of facilities, you must also submit:
 - **SF-429 Real Property Status Report—Cover Page with Attachment B**
 - Read the [submission instructions](#).
 - An application fully compliant with the requirements under HSPPS [Facilities, 45 CFR §1303 Subpart E](#).

Non-federal Match is not required for these Disaster Recovery funds. SF-424-A Section C, Non-Federal Resources, should state \$0. Additional project or activity information may be required depending on the proposed use of funds.

More information about the process for submitting a funding application will be forthcoming in early April. In the interim, please contact OHSDisasterRecovery@acf.hhs.gov along with your program and grant specialists. We are committed to supporting you throughout this rebuilding and restoration period.

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

/ Khari M. Garvin /

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