



ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES

Office of Community Services | 330 C Street, S.W., Washington, DC 20201
www.acf.hhs.gov/ocs

Social Services Block Grant

Dear Colleague Letter

DCL#: SSBG-DCL-2021-01

DATE: January 14, 2021

TO: States and Territories Administering the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) Program

SUBJECT: Use of SSBG Funds to Expand Educational Opportunities

ATTACHMENT(S): NA

Dear Colleagues,

The purpose of this message is to provide guidance to states and territories on the use of Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) funds for educational services for low-income, school-age students and families impacted by school closure.

To support the impact on learning due to the public health challenges and uncertainties imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic and the shutdown of in-person learning, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, consistent with the SSBG Act, clarifies that the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) would not object to states' use of SSBG funds to address the educational needs of low-income and disadvantaged students impacted by school closure. This includes emergency learning scholarships and services that are generally not available for no cost.

States and territories play a critical role in supporting low-income, school-aged, and disadvantaged students and families. The SSBG Act grants states and territories the authority to use SSBG regularly appropriated funding for social services to address an array of goals, including achieving or maintaining economic self-support and achieving or maintaining self-sufficiency, which are closely linked to adequate education. The SSBG Uniform Definitions of Service Categories includes *Education and Training Services*: "those services provided to improve knowledge or daily living skills and to enhance cultural opportunities. Services may include instruction or training in, but are not limited to, such issues as consumer education, health education, community protection and safety education, literacy education, English as a

second language, and General Educational Development. Component services or activities may include screening, assessment, and testing; individual or group instruction; tutoring; provision of books, supplies and instructional material; counseling; transportation; and referral to community resources.”

States and territories have a long history of addressing the educational needs of disadvantaged, school-aged youth. Low-income and disadvantaged school-aged students have been negatively impacted by prolonged school closures and many students are not meeting their educational milestones. The impact to low-income, minority students, and children with disabilities is even more devastating, as virtual learning may not sufficiently meet their educational needs.

The Office of Community Services (OCS), within ACF, is committed to ongoing partnership with states and territories to address the unique and widespread impacts of this national emergency. States and territories that would like to revise their SSBG budget to increase estimated expenditures for Education and Training Services should reach out to their SSBG Program Specialist for additional information and guidance.

Thank you for your attention and OCS looks forward to continuing to provide high-quality services to OCS grantees.

/s/

J. Janelle George

Acting Director

Office of Community Services