

# COVID-19 Resources

For State, Local, and Tribal Human Services Leaders

[www.acf.hhs.gov/oro](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/oro)

The COVID-19 crisis requires a Whole Family response from state, local, and tribal leaders. This information builds on [ACF's COVID-19 Resources](#) and is geared towards state leaders. The intent is to provide current mandatory program flexibilities, guidance and resources in ACF programs, as well as information on other federal programs that serve vulnerable children and families.

The CARES Act updates policy and provides supplemental funding for human services and other programs targeting vulnerable children and families. Information on supplemental funding is included below.

This [document](#) provides information on ACF funding flexibilities for supporting a virtual workforce, and providing emergency personal protective equipment for staff working directly with clients. Information is also provided on any caps on administrative expenditures.

**NEW!** This [document](#) summarizes existing information from ACF program offices regarding the treatment of (1) stimulus payments (also referred to as recovery rebates or economic impact payments) and (2) unemployment compensation provided under the CARES Act for purposes of eligibility determination in ACF programs, or for purposes of setting and enforcing child support orders. If additional information becomes available, it will be added to this summary.

## ACF Mandatory Program COVID-19 Program Flexibilities, Guidance and Resources

### Child Care

The Office of Child Care has a live [COVID-19 Resources Webpage](#) relevant to CCDF stakeholders. Among the resources included are:

- [CCDF-ACF-IM-2020-01](#) provides an overview and guidance on the supplemental CCDF Discretionary funds made available through the CARES Act.
- [ChildCare.gov](#) has created a new page where parents can connect with state specific resources to help them find, and pay for child care now during the COVID-19 pandemic and as the economy rebounds.
- [New! Tip Sheet for States and Territories: Using CCDF Amendments and Waiver Flexibilities to meet the Child Care Needs as a Result of COVID-19](#): This tip sheet is intended to assist Lead Agencies in understanding what flexibility is available to them, and how to use it to continue child care services.

- [CCDF Frequently Asked Questions in Response to COVID-19](#): these will be updated as new questions and responses are developed. Topics in the FAQ document cover parent job loss, increasing childcare demand, contingency planning, and more;
- Existing CCDF guidance, published in 2017, covers relevant flexibilities in the CCDF law related to emergency situations. This [Information Memorandum](#) summarizes options for Lead Agencies to change eligibility or priority criteria for child care assistance to permit uninterrupted care, waive family co-payment requirements, or use quality dollars to provide immediate assistance to impacted families, including those that do not participate in CCDF.
- Slides from [webinars](#) with grantees, which were held on March 18-19, to share information on flexibilities and hear about challenges.
- The CDC released [guidance](#) for child care providers that remain open during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The CARES Act provides **\$3.5 billion** to the **Child Care and Development Block Grant** in grants to states for immediate assistance to child care providers to prevent them from going out of business and to otherwise support child care for families, including for healthcare workers, first responders, and others playing critical roles during this crisis. 2020 CARES Act CCDBG Supplemental Funding Allocations for States and Territories can be found [here](#). It also provides **\$750 million** for grants to all **Head Start programs** to help them respond to coronavirus-related needs of children and families, including making up for lost learning time. The Office of Child Care has a summary of the child care provisions in the CARES Act [here](#).

## Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

[Instructions](#) are provided on how the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program can support people affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The guidance also outlines flexibilities within TANF that enable states and tribes to ease requirements on TANF applicants or recipients. The PI identifies the following strategies, among others:

- Providing non-recurrent, short-term benefits to families to make up for lost wages and help them meet basic needs;
- Granting good cause exemptions from work requirements for TANF participants who cannot go to work or training activities because, for example, they are ill, caring for a child whose school or day care is closed due to the pandemic, or because the work or training site is closed;
- Increasing cash benefit levels for TANF cash assistance recipients who have reduced income or increased needs related to the COVID-19 pandemic; and
- Providing case management by phone or other virtual/electronic communication platforms.

The guidance states that while ACF does not have authority to waive the work participation rate that states must meet, it does have authority to grant relief from resulting penalties in face of natural disasters and other calamities. ACF will exercise this authority to the maximum extent possible during this current COVID-19 emergency.

The CARES Act extends TANF through November 30, 2020.

## Children's Bureau

The Children's Bureau has a live [COVID-19 Resources page](#) which will be updated frequently.

- This April 17<sup>th</sup> [letter](#) from the Deputy Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services urges state Governors to classify child welfare workers and service providers as level 1 emergency responders to allow them greater access to personal protective equipment.
- This April 15<sup>th</sup> [letter](#) from the Children's Bureau advises child welfare leaders of the flexibility of certain requirements regarding fingerprint-based criminal records checks and caseworker visits to a child's home due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- This [guide](#) from the Capacity Building Center for Courts describes best practices and other recommendations for remote or virtual court hearings in child welfare cases and this [letter](#) from the Children's Bureau encourages state court administrators and chief justices to engage their Court Improvement Programs to assist dependency courts in their response to COVID-19, particularly in acquiring and supporting telework and video-conferencing equipment and software to continue case oversight.
- On April 10, 2020 a [letter](#) was sent to child welfare leaders informing them that all Title IV-E Foster Care Eligibility Reviews and National Youth in Transition Database Reviews are postponed for the foreseeable future.
- On April 7, 2020 a [joint statement](#) by several legal organizations describes ways in which the court system can support families involved with child welfare during the COVID-19 pandemic, including ensuring access to due process and counsel and promoting family time, case review, and the role of court leadership.
- On April 1, 2020, a [letter](#) was sent to child welfare leaders informing them that the deadline for the Kinship Navigator Funding applications have been extended to May 1, 2020. It also states that a separate application will not be needed for Family First Prevention Services Act Transition grants.
- On March 27, 2020, a [letter](#) was sent to court leaders clarifying some of the questions around restricting parent/child contact during the COVID-19 crisis, encouraging courts/judges to be mindful of the needs of children in foster care to have ongoing contact with their parents, particularly during a time of crisis.
- On March 18, 2020, a [letter](#) was sent to child welfare administrators informing agencies that they may use videoconferencing to meet the title IV-B monthly caseworker visit requirement under narrow circumstances given the current public health emergency situation.
- On March 12, 2020, a [letter](#) was sent urging child welfare agencies to immediately contact all foster youth and young adults in colleges or other settings who may need assistance finding and securing housing while their college or university is closed.

The CARES Act provides **\$45 million** for grants to states to support the child welfare needs of families

during this crisis, and to help keep families together.

## Child Support

The Office of Child Support Enforcement has a COVID-19 [Frequently Asked Questions for Child Support Programs](#) page that will be updated regularly.

On April 13, 2020 a [letter](#) was sent to the child support directors clarifying that the stimulus payments (referred to as recovery rebates) made to eligible noncustodial parents who owe past-due child support and who are subject to intercept under the Federal Income Tax Refund Offset Program will be offset by the amount of past-due child support.

## Whole Family Approach to COVID-19 Response

### Food and Nutrition

This [website](#) provides program flexibilities and contingencies for the Food and Nutrition Services' (FNS) nutrition programs, including Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), congregate meals, WIC, and school meals. Here are [Questions and Answers](#) on FNS Food Programs for States responding to COVID-19.

The CARES Act provides **\$15.51 billion** in additional funding for the **SNAP to cover waiver authorities** granted in H.R. 6201 and anticipated increases in participation as a result of coronavirus. It also provides **\$500 million** for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and certain **WIC statutory waiver authorities** necessary in a public health emergency to encourage social distancing and reduce in-person visits to the WIC clinics.

### Parents as Workers

The CARES Act authorizes recovery rebates of \$1,200 for all Americans with adjusted gross income up to \$75,000 (\$112,500 for head of household) and \$2,400 for married couples with adjusted gross income up to \$150,000 who file a joint return. Amounts increase by \$500 for every child. The recovery rebate is not subject to federal income tax. As with any tax refund under current law, **the rebate is not treated as income, or as a resource for a 12-month period, in determining an individual's eligibility or assistance amount under any federally funded public program.**

Individuals who did not file taxes, or receive Social Security retirement, disability (SSDI), or survivor benefits **can submit an online form to receive the rebate.** The form is accessed [here](#).

The Department of Labor [website](#) provides resources to employers and workers on preparing for the

COVID-19. There is guidance to states as employers on paid leave requirements [here](#). Information on **which workers are deemed essential** in the pandemic response can be found [here](#) under questions 56 and 57.

The CARES Act authorizes three new **Unemployment Insurance** Programs. DOL released UI [guidance](#) indicating eligible individuals should be able to work, available for work, and actively seeking work. However, states **shall offer flexibility in meeting the “actively seeking work” requirement** if individuals are unable to search for work because of COVID-19, including because of illness, quarantine, or movement restriction. It also provides states maximum flexibility to recruit and select staff through December 31, 2020, to quickly process applications and claims.

Local workforce boards have **additional flexibility** to use funds received under the **Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act** for administrative costs, including for online resources and allows Governors to utilize reserved workforce funds on rapid response activities for addressing COVID-19.

While states are required to operate a SNAP Employment and Training (E&T) program, FNS issued [Question and Answers](#) outlining their broad discretion in developing criteria for who should and should not be required to participate in E&T.

Both for-profit and non-profit small businesses, including child care businesses, with less than 500 employees will be eligible to apply for **small business loans of up to \$10 million**, of which 8 weeks of monthly payroll, mortgage/rent, and utility payments will be eligible for forgiveness. The Act expands eligibility for entities suffering economic harm due to COVID-19 to access the Small Business Administration’s (SBA) **Economic Injury Disaster Loans (EIDL)**, while also giving SBA more flexibility to process and disperse small dollar loans. It provides **\$265 million** for grants to SBA resource partners, including **Small Business Development Centers and Women’s Business Centers**, to offer counseling, training, and related assistance to small businesses affected by COVID-19. **\$10 million** is provided for the Minority Business Development Agency to provide these services through Minority Business Centers and Minority Chambers of Commerce.

Funding is also available to support “short-time” partial compensation programs where employers reduce hours instead of laying off workers. In addition, the legislation includes changes to the deduction for charitable contributions and a refundable payroll tax credit for wages paid by employers whose gross receipts decline by over 50 percent or whose businesses are fully or partially suspended due to COVID-19.

## **Education for Children and Parents**

Resources for schools and school personnel can be found [here](#). This [fact sheet](#) addresses services specifically for children with disabilities.

The U.S. Department of Education rolled out a [waiver request process](#) that states can use to repurpose

existing federal funding to pay for new technology and teacher training associated with online learning.

**NEW!** This Office of Career, Adult and Technical Education [website](#) provides **information, resources, and flexibilities to States and local career and technical education programs** funded under the Perkins V statute as they respond to the pandemic.

The CARES Act designates **\$13.5 billion** in formula funding directly to states, to help schools respond to coronavirus and related school closures, meet the immediate needs of students and teachers, **improve the use of education technology, support distance education, and make up for lost learning time.**

**NEW!** This [list](#) provides State funding allocations under the **Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund (GEER Fund)** authorized by the CARES Act.

It provides **\$14.25 billion** to states for **higher education emergency relief** for institutions of higher education to prevent, prepare for, and respond to coronavirus. Funds may be used to defray expenses for institutions of higher education, such as lost revenue, technology costs associated with a transition to distance education, and grants to students for food, housing, course materials, technology, health care, and child care.

The Act provides **\$100 million** in targeted funding through Project SERV for elementary and secondary schools and institutions of higher education **to respond to the immediate needs of coronavirus** and the effect on students.

## Health

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has developed a [partner toolkit](#) with materials available on the COVID-19. Medicaid specific resources can be found [here](#). CMS also has COVID-19 FAQs for State Medicaid and CHIP agencies that updated regularly [here](#). The CARES Act amends a section of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act of 2020 (Public Law 116-127) to ensure that states are able to receive the **Medicaid 6.2 percent FMAP increase.**

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration [website](#) houses resources for individuals, providers and communities related to behavioral and mental health in the context of COVID-19.

The CARES Act provides **\$425 million for the SAMHSA** to address mental health and substance use disorders as a result of the coronavirus pandemic: **\$250 million** for Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics to increase access to mental health care services; **\$50 million** for suicide prevention to provide increased support for those most in need of intervention; and **\$100 million** in SAMHSA Emergency Response grants to provide flexible funding to address mental health, substance use disorders, and provide resources and support to youth and the homeless during the pandemic.

The Health Resources and Services Administration [website](#) includes Frequently Asked Questions related to

COVID-19 and health centers.

The CARES Act provides **\$275 million for HRSA** to expand services and capacity for rural hospitals, telehealth, poison control centers, and the Ryan White HIV/AIDS program. Language is also included to allow Community Health Centers to use FY2020 funding to maintain or increase staffing and capacity to address the coronavirus.

This [webpage](#) provides information for older adults and persons with disabilities. The CARES Act provides **\$955 million** for aging and disability services programs, including **senior nutrition; home and community-based supportive services; family caregivers; elder justice; and independent living.**

## Housing and Homelessness

The CARES Act provides **\$1 billion in direct funding to local community-based organizations** to provide [a wide-range of social services and emergency assistance](#) for those who need it most through the Community Services Block Grant. It also **provides \$900 million in Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program grants** to states to support immediate home energy assistance for low-income households affected by coronavirus. **New!** ACF [released these funds](#) to grantees on May 11, 2020.

This [website](#) provides an overview of resources and the impact of infectious diseases on the homeless population. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development announced the availability of [regulatory waivers](#) of certain Continuum of Care (CoC), Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG), Housing for Persons With AIDS (HOPWA), and Consolidated Plan requirements. **NEW!** This [guide](#) provides resources for Public Housing Agencies, including information on the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

The CARES Act provides **\$4 billion in Homeless Assistance Grants** that will enable state and local governments to address coronavirus among the homeless population; **\$1.25 billion in Tenant-Based Rental Assistance** to preserve Section 8 voucher rental assistance for seniors, the disabled, and low-income working families, who will experience loss of income from the coronavirus; and **\$685 million in Public Housing Operating Fund**, which may be used for activities to support or maintain the health and safety of assisted individuals and families, and activities to support education and child care for impacted families.



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