

**OFFICE ON TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS  
COVID-19 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS  
PART ONE**

**GRANT ADMINISTRATION**

On March 19, 2020, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) issued [M-20-17](#), which provides administrative relief guidance for recipients and applicants of federal financial assistance who are affected by Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).

On March 31, 2020, the Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families (ACF) issued [Information Memorandum: IM-ACF-OA-2020-01](#), which offers additional guidance about grant flexibilities to ACF applicants and recipients conducting human service activities related to or affected by COVID-19.

Based on the guidance provided by OMB and ACF, the Office on Trafficking in Persons (OTIP) developed the following Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) for grantees seeking information regarding grants funded under the Trafficking Victim Assistance Program (TVAP), the Domestic Victims of Human Trafficking (DVHT) Program, the Look Beneath the Surface Regional Anti-Trafficking Program (LBSRAT), and the National Human Trafficking Hotline (NHTH).

OTIP grantees are encouraged to contact their Federal Project Officer (FPO) to discuss programmatic, administrative, or financial questions their organization may have or for further clarification or direction regarding guidance provided thus far.

**1. Can grantees use ACF funds to pay for staff who need to take extended leave for care of family members or themselves?**

ACF will allow recipients to continue to charge salaries and benefits to current active federal awards consistent with the recipient's policy of paying salaries (under unexpected or extraordinary circumstances) from all funding sources, federal and non-federal. Grantees will be permitted to amend or create policies to put emergency contingencies in place.

Grantees may charge other costs to federal awards necessary to resume activities supported by the award, consistent with applicable federal cost principles and the benefit to the project. ACF will evaluate the grantee's ability to resume the project activity in the future and the appropriateness of future funding, as done under normal circumstances based on subsequent progress reports and other communications with the grantee.

Grant recipients must maintain appropriate records and cost documentation as required by 45 CFR §75.302 (2 CFR §200.302) (Financial Management and Standards for Financial Management Systems) and 45 CFR §75.361 (2 CFR §200.333) (Retention Requirement for Records) to substantiate the charging of any cost for salaries and other project activities related to interruption of operations or services.

Further, grantees are not allowed to use funds from one federal grant to pay employees for working on another federal grant. The Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for HHS Awards provide that “any cost allocable to a particular Federal award under the principles provided for in this part may not be charged to other Federal awards to overcome fund deficiencies, to avoid restrictions imposed by Federal statutes, regulations, or terms and conditions of the Federal awards, or for other reasons” (45 CFR 75.405(c)).

**2. Can grantees use grant funds to cover costs related to the cancellation of events or travel as a result of COVID-19?**

To the extent permitted by law, ACF will allow grant recipients to incur costs related to the cancellation of events, travel, and related event expenses due to the public health emergency. Grant recipients may charge these costs to their award without regard to allowability of costs, reasonable costs, and allocable costs. ACF will allow grant recipients to charge the full cost of cancellation when the event, travel, or other related event expenses are conducted under the auspices of the grant. Grant recipients should not assume additional funds will be available should the charging of cancellation or other fees result in a shortage of funds. ACF will require grant recipients to maintain appropriate records and cost documentation as required by 45 CFR §75.302 (2 CFR §200.302) – Financial Management and 45 CFR §75.361 (2 CFR §200.333) – Retention Requirement of Records to substantiate the charging of any cancellation or other fees related to interruption of operations or services due to the public health emergency.

**3. Can grantees use grant funds for costs associated with remote case management?**

Pursuant to [IM-ACF-OA-2020-01](#), activities payable under the grant must be consistent with the original purpose of the award. For OTIP grants that allow program funds to cover case management and direct services, OTIP will allow flexibilities to grantees to ensure they are able to continue serving clients, and that the clients are able to access remote case management services. OTIP will allow costs related to remote case management implementation for grantees through the allowance of project funds to cover the increased cost of remote case management software or hardware and related security costs. OTIP will also allow costs related to supporting clients’ access to remote case management through the purchase of technology or communication tools for clients such as cell phones, phone cards, payment of phone bills, and internet access services.

**4. What direct assistance are grantees currently allowed to provide to clients through OTIP grant funds?**

Pursuant to [IM-ACF-OA-2020-01](#), activities payable under the grant must be consistent with the original purpose of the award. For OTIP grants (TVAP and DVHT) that allow program funds to cover case management and direct services, grantees may cover costs that support a client’s ability to meet their basic needs. Allowable costs that grantees may cover related to COVID-19 include those already currently covered under direct services through TVAP and DVHT, such as:

- Housing assistance, including rent, mortgage, and utilities payments
- Emergency housing, including motels, hotels, and extended stay lodging

- Transportation assistance, including gasoline, bus passes, or private transportation (including taxi services)
- Food assistance, including grocery gift cards and food delivery for clients who may not leave their homes
- Medical services, including preventative health appointments
- Behavioral health services, including telehealth mental health or substance use counseling
- Basic needs such as food and clothing
- Gift cards to cover miscellaneous client expenses
- Purchase of cell phones for clients to access remote case management and stay connected to service providers and family members
- Child care

While the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 does not authorize direct benefits for family members, OTIP's whole family approach allows family members to derive benefits from funded services provided to the client when it is in the best interest of the client. For a full list of allowable costs related to direct services, grantees should refer to their grant's funding opportunity announcement or contact their FPO and Grants Management Specialist (GMS).

#### **5. Will OTIP continue on-site monitoring?**

OTIP is postponing all on-site program monitoring activities at this time. On-site monitoring will resume in the future when it is safe for grantee staff, clients, and federal staff. FPOs will continue scheduling quarterly program calls and conduct routine desk monitoring through the review of financial and program reports for each individual grant recipient, and the National Human Trafficking Training and Technical Assistance Center (NHTTAC) will provide technical assistance and engage grantees for additional virtual training and technical assistance, as needed.

#### **6. Can OTIP grantees modify the project outcomes in grant agreements?**

OTIP grantees are encouraged to consult with their GMS and FPO to determine if an official change of scope of project outcomes is necessary. However, as stated in [IM-ACF-OA-2020-01](#), ACF will evaluate the grantee's ability to resume the project activity in the future and the appropriateness of future funding, as done under normal circumstances, based on subsequent progress reports and other communications with the grantee.

#### **7. What flexibilities do grantees have to make budget modifications to respond to the crisis?**

To the extent permitted by law, ACF will waive existing requirements to seek prior approval if the costs are directly related to the COVID-19 emergency and necessary to effectively address the response. However, grant recipients may continue to seek prior approval to avoid potential disallowance or dispute proposed or charged expenses to the federal award. Grant recipients should remain in communication with their GMS and must continue to act within existing guidelines for use of federal funds. All costs charged to federal awards must be consistent with federal cost policy guidelines and the terms of the award, except where specified. While advance

notice is waived, the overall approval cost requirement is not. ACF is requiring grant recipients to maintain appropriate records and cost documentation as required by 45 CFR §75.302 (2 CFR §200.302) (Financial Management and Standards for Financial Management Systems) and 45 CFR §75.361 (2 CFR §200.333) (Retention Requirement for Records), to substantiate the charging of any cancellation or other fees related to the interruption of operations or services.

**8. Has the threshold for making budget adjustments without prior approval been adjusted as part of the flexibilities ACF has provided to grantees?**

Unless otherwise noted, the budget revision requirements remain in effect.

**9. Will OTIP postpone the application due dates for any of its currently active Notice of Funding Opportunities?**

OTIP Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) will be due within the timeframe indicated in the announcement. OTIP is making every effort to provide at least 60 days for applicants to complete and submit their proposals.

**10. My grant is set to expire on September 30, 2020. Is my grant eligible for a no-cost extension?**

All current OTIP grantees with project periods that will end on September 30, 2020, are eligible to receive a no-cost extension for a total of 12 months. No-cost extensions must conclude within the allowable 12 months, by September 30, 2021. If you are planning to request a no-cost extension for your project, please notify your FPO and GMS as soon as possible to discuss the process for making a request to extend your project period.

**11. What is the effective date of the [IM-ACF-OA-2020-01](#) regarding waivers and flexibilities? Are the waivers and flexibilities retroactive?**

The [IM-ACF-OA-2020-01](#) issued on March 30, 2020 may be applied retroactively to January 27, 2020. The Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services declared the public health emergency on January 31, 2020 (retroactive to January 27, 2020). See the [press release](#) for more information.