



ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES

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Rural Community Development Program

Dear Colleague Letter

DCL#: RCD-DCL-2020-01
DATE: March 12, 2020
TO: RCD Grantees
SUBJECT: Partnership to Address the Spread of COVID-19
ATTACHMENT(S): N/A

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you for your continued engagement and partnership with us to address and mitigate the spread of COVID-19. We highly value our strong ongoing partnership, and hope to continue to be a resource to you as you implement community mitigation techniques. As you might imagine, a number of HHS divisions are releasing COVID-19-related information on funding and guidance. We thought it would be helpful to batch up information on key issues to keep you up-to-date.

Funding for States to Address COVID-19

Today, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) [announced](#) upcoming action by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to provide resources to state and local jurisdictions in support of our nation's response to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).

The \$8.3 billion dollar Supplemental passed by Congress included [statutory language](#) which prescribed the exact formula for disbursing the money: states will receive 90% of their [2019 CDC PHEP grants](#). This marks the first tranche of funding to states from the \$8.3 billion supplemental. Today, CDC is contacting State Health Officers to move forward with awarding over \$560 million to states, localities, territories, and tribes. CDC will use existing networks to reach out to state and local jurisdictions to access this initial funding. To view the list of CDC funding actions to jurisdictions, click [here](#).

Helping Communities Know Mitigation Strategies

Yesterday, CDC released their “[Implementation of Mitigation Strategies for Communities with Local COVID-19 Transmission](#).” Essentially, this is a guide describing possible mitigation strategies for communities dealing with transmission at three different levels: (1) None/Minimal, (2) Moderate, or (3) Substantial. Community mitigation strategies, which are non-pharmaceutical interventions, are often the most available interventions to help slow the transmission of COVID-19 in communities. The Mitigation Plan includes a set of actions that persons and communities can take to slow the spread of respiratory virus infections. The Community Mitigation Plan can be found [here](#).

Guidance on Infection Control For Healthcare Workers

Yesterday, CDC released updated guidance on infection prevention and control recommendations. Healthcare workers are fighting this outbreak on the front lines, and this guidance is intended to provide assistance to healthcare settings that are handling suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19. This guidance is applicable to all U.S. healthcare settings, but not for non-healthcare settings. There is separate guidance for that. The new guidance on infection control can be found [here](#).

Guidance for Preparing Workplaces

This week, the Department of Labor released practical guidance for how to prepare workplaces for COVID-19. This guidance will help to educate workers and employers about the COVID-19 outbreak. The guidance can be found [here](#).

Guidance for Laboratories

The CDC has been actively working to address the need for testing across the country. In addition to public health laboratories, private labs are doing testing. In addition to reviewing the [Updated Guidance on Evaluating and Testing Persons for Coronavirus Disease 2019](#), the CDC recently updated the [FAQ website for laboratories](#), and we encourage you to read through the site to answer preliminary questions, though we stand ready to answer other questions that you may have.

Guidance to Prepare Homeless Shelters

We recognize persons experiencing homelessness are an especially vulnerable population. CDC released guidance on March 9, to help homeless shelters plan, prepare and respond to COVID-19. The guidance can be found [here](#).

OMB Flexibilities

On March 9, 2020, OMB issued a memo that provides administrative relief for recipients and applicants of Federal financial assistance who are directly impacted by COVID-19. The grant flexibilities include 10 actions that HHS can take to provide short-term administrative and financial management relief, allowing funds to be awarded quicker and giving grantees the ability to focus on their critical response, research, or services. More information can be found [here](#).

General Preparation Information

On March 9, 2020, the White House Coronavirus Task Force released practical steps that we recommend posting and sharing to keep workplaces, school, home and commercial establishments safe. This information can be found [here](#).

The COVID-19 response is a whole-of-government effort and each department has a number of specific resources. We encourage you to explore those resources as necessary to respond to the situation in your communities.

If you have any questions on these items or other issues, please feel free to reach out at OCSRegistrar@icf.com.

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

/s/

J. Janelle George

Acting Deputy Director

Office of Community Services