



Considerations Regarding Transition-Age Students and Youth with Disabilities Accessing Funding from the American Rescue Plan and Other Short-Term Resources

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES Act), the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA), and the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) offer state education agencies and other organizations an opportunity to access temporary funding. ARPA, specifically, will provide local districts with funds to address appropriations, mental health, and teacher shortages.

The **purpose of this document** is to offer questions to consider when accessing the temporary funds from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES Act; March 27, 2020), the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSSA; December 27, 2020), and the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA; March 11, 2021) to **ensure services for transition-age students and youth with disabilities are represented in planned activities**. The **audiences for this resource are state education and vocational rehabilitation leadership, local school district and agency partners, family organizations, and advocates**.

The amount of dollars provided to states, and in turn to local entities, varies among states and across funds with limitations for expending such funds outlined in each act. Additionally, there

are requirements about the distribution of funds locally and the ARPA, for example, contains requirements for the percentage of funds to be expended on evidence-based interventions as well as the development of an LEA 'use of funds' plan. Please see Additional Resources at the end of this document for specifics. As local school districts and agencies consider a myriad of supplemental programs utilizing temporary funding, ensuring equity in access for transition-age students and youth with disabilities and especially those of marginalized groups is paramount. To facilitate planning, consider how funds could support (a) effective instructional strategies, (b) learning recovery opportunities, (c) re-engagement opportunities, (d) summer work experiences, (e) compensatory education, and (f) access to technology, including assistive technology for transition-age students and youth with disabilities.

The following **points of consideration and connections** are intended to ensure all students and youth can benefit from the various relief dollars as leaders:

1. identify the benefits of state/ district plans to utilize funds;
2. consider additional consequences (impact) of state/ district's plan on access, programs, progress, and outcomes;

3. seek additional information and resources to support the re-entry and recovery of learning for transition-age students and youth with disabilities; and
4. remain informed about plan implementation within a state.

Considerations and Connections

- **The Plan:** Find the district or state plan for accessing and spending these dollars. Solicit input from a broad group of stakeholders, including representatives from the local school district, parent advocacy group, and partner services providers (e.g., vocational rehabilitation and development disability) to identify strategies that will expand the plan's reach and benefit. Search websites for American Rescue Plan Act to learn about others' plans. If the submitted plan includes use of funds to address personnel shortages, how are secondary special educators, career and technical educators, school counselors, related services providers, paraprofessionals, transition counselors, shared positions with VR or other agencies targeted for hire?
- **Professional Development:** What professional development will be provided to sustain new and support existing employees? What professional development is needed to implement effective instructional practices for students with specific disabilities (e.g., autism,

intellectual disability)? How can secondary educators (career and technical education and special education), school counselors, related service providers, as well as vocational rehabilitation counselors and specifically, those VR counselors providing pre-employment transition services, participate in professional development, especially cross-agency opportunities related to work-based learning and interagency collaboration?

- **Staff Capacity:** How can staff capacity be increased to improve student in- and post-school outcomes in the wake of remote and virtual learning? Are staff skilled in implementing evidence-based interventions related to interagency collaboration, work-based learning, self-advocacy/self-determination, career awareness, family expectations and involvement, and career and technical education relevant to students and youth with disabilities?
- **Mental Health:** How can person-driven mental health services be incorporated into the plan? Can these additional resources be accessed and included in students' IEPs as transition services, where appropriate? How can mental health strategies be provided for all students and staff so as not to single any one individual?
- **Partnerships:** Other than education and vocational rehabilitation partners, what other community partners and agencies are

or can be engaged to support students with disabilities, including those who experience homelessness, poverty, are from the LGBTQ+ community, are in foster care, or military families?

- **Technology:** How can technology, including assistive technology, be expanded, updated, or up graded to fill ‘digital deserts’? How can unmet individual student technology needs be addressed?
- **Extended Services:** Are funds* allocated to extend services for an additional year for students who were unable to graduate in 2020 or 2021? What supports, services, and provisions are needed to include and accommodate individual students with disabilities who are not on track to receive a regular high school diploma in those extended services? How are students with disabilities being included for re-entry opportunities? What supports will students and youth with disabilities need in order to participate in and benefit from summer or after school programs (e.g., mental health supports, housing supports)? What summer work experiences can be created? What opportunities are there to provide or expand pre-employment transition services?
- **Marginalized Populations:** Homeless Students and youth - with disabilities - have been impacted particularly negatively during the pandemic. How are McKinney-

Vento Homeless Assistance Act and ARP ESSER Funds to support homeless children and youth being used to locate and re-engage students and youth in school and community services? What services might students who are marginalized due to poverty, addiction, geographic context, family structures, language, race, or ethnicity need in order to participate and benefit from re-engagement opportunities?

Potential Effects

The previous questions may provide personnel at state and local levels who serve transition-age students and out-of-school youth with disabilities with discussion starters to help ensure ALL students benefit. Asking questions and seeking information about the plans on how funds will be used increases that likelihood. Additionally, transition personnel might consider possible unintended consequences.

- If funds are distributed based on population, are there specific populations (e.g., students in rural communities, military-connected students, low incidence disability populations) who will be disadvantaged? Are there other potential inequities in the distribution of funds across the state or within a local community?
- How will use of temporary funds for staffing needs (e.g., support for mental health) affect other funds typically accessed by the

state or LEA or maintenance of effort requirements?

- How will existing plans be enhanced – or potentially conflict – with the new plan?

Additional Resources

American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ARP ESSER) State Plan Application Technical Assistance

<https://oese.ed.gov/offices/american-rescue-plan/american-rescue-plan-elementary-and-secondary-school-emergency-relief/resources/>

Frequently Asked Questions: Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Programs Governor's Emergency Education Relief Programs

https://oese.ed.gov/files/2021/05/ESSER.GEER_FAQs_5.26.21_745AM_FINALb0cd6833f6f46e03ba2d97d30aff953260028045f9ef3b18ea602db4b32b1d99.pdf

High-Quality CTE During COVID-19: Leveraging Federal Relief Funds at the Local Level

https://www.acteonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/HighQualityCTE_COVIDFunding_May2021_Final2.pdf

5 Questions to Ask Districts About How They Will Use New Federal Funding to Support Students

<https://edtrust.org/resource/5-questions-to-ask-districts-about-how-they-will-use-new-federal-funding-to-support-students/>

* IDEA funds have different rules than CARES, CCRSA, and ARPA funds. These funding rules must be followed to determine allowable expenditures.

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