

Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS) Technical Assistance (TA) Center

Hello School Safety Partner,

Thank you for contacting the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Safe and Supportive Schools (OSSS) and its [Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools \(REMS\) Technical Assistance \(TA\) Center](#) with your request for support with applying for reimbursement through the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Public Assistance (PA) Program. DHS is currently responding to new authorities and appropriations, as directed by Congress, and is asking that state agencies remain patient as FEMA conducts required federal activities and as states design new programs and models.

The PA Program is state-led, and due to its unique considerations, the models put forth by each state might vary based on their unique governance and resources. Using schools as an example and considering many of the essential continuity of operations (COOP) services that they offer to states and localities, there may be flexibility for how states design those programs.

In brief, school districts work in partnership with their local emergency management partners and non-public schools work in partnership with their state emergency management agency to initiate the process. However, as noted above, states do have some flexibilities, as they have been given new authorities to use the PA Program in response to COVID-19. Furthermore, FEMA has

- Adapted the PA Program application process in response to COVID-19;
- Created a Simplified Application Process;
- Extended the 30-day application deadline requirement nationally and will keep Requests for Public Assistance (RPAs) open for the duration of the nationally declared Public Health Emergency, unless the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Assistant Administrator of Recovery Directorate recommends that an earlier deadline is appropriate. (A 30-day advanced notice will be provided if the deadline changes or is extended by a Regional Administrator.)

It is important for all state agencies to work together to support true cohesion. An effective strategy is for each state education agency (SEA) be engaged with their state COVID-19 taskforce. Now is the time to collaborate with state and local emergency management agencies and partners. Users can go to locate FEMA Regional Contacts through this [Web page](#), or visit the [REMS TA Center Interactive Map](#). The REMS TA Center map provides state-level, higher ed and K-12 school safety information such as state-specific information, resources, mandates and policies, as well as links to the various state/field offices of state partners with roles and responsibilities in school safety.



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In March, Congress also introduced the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, which provides for payments from various Federal agencies to state, local, and tribal governments responding to the COVID-19 outbreak. (Eligible applicants were required to submit the certification required by the CARES Act to the U.S. Department of Treasury by April 17, 2020.) FEMA is actively engaging with interagency partners, including the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, to ensure assistance offered through the FEMA PA Program does not duplicate other available assistance, such as relief funds available through the CARES Act. Additionally, the U.S. Department of Education has funding allocated to the Elementary and Secondary Schools Emergency Relief Fund to ensure learning continues.

As detailed on the next page, FEMA has put forth coronavirus-specific fact sheets, and we will continue to share information as it becomes available.

FEMA COVID-19 Pandemic Guidance

<https://www.fema.gov/coronavirus/news-releases>

Guidance on COVID-19 Activities Eligible for PA Reimbursement

COVID-19 Pandemic: Eligible Emergency Protective Measures Fact Sheet

<https://www.fema.gov/news-release/2020/03/19/coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic-eligible-emergency-protective-measures>

Information on How to Apply for PA

COVID-19 Pandemic: Public Assistance Simplified Application Fact Sheet

<https://www.fema.gov/news-release/2020/03/23/coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic-public-assistance-simplified-application>

Information for Private Nonprofit Organizations

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic: Private Nonprofit Organizations Fact Sheet

<https://www.fema.gov/news-release/2020/04/02/coronavirus-covid19-pandemic-private-nonprofit-organizations>

Information on Program and Policy Considerations

[The Public Assistance Program and Policy Guide \(PAPPG\)](#) version 3.1 dated April 2018. This guide provides important program and policy considerations for the PA Program. It goes into detail about the purpose of the program, the policies on public assistance and program administration. This [Web page](#) provides a copy of the guide in Spanish, and also offers guidance on quick tips and tricks for navigating the guide.

Find more details on the FEMA PA Program below and on the following pages.



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FEMA Public Assistance Program

Following a Presidential emergency or major disaster declaration, FEMA can assist eligible Applicants [State, local, Tribal, and Territorial (SLTT) governments and certain Private Nonprofit (PNP) entities] with the response to and recovery from emergencies and major disasters. FEMA provides PA funding to the applicable State, Territorial, or Tribal government (Recipient), and the Recipient distributes grant funding to Subrecipients, such as schools. FEMA uses the term Applicant when referring to the responsible entity for a project. Specifically, the program provides assistance for the repair, replacement or restoration of disaster-damaged facilities, and for the cost of debris removal and emergency protective measures. The program also encourages protection from future damage by providing assistance for hazard mitigation measures during the recovery process.

Process In Brief

Generally, SLTT applicants, including school systems, contact their local and/or state emergency management partners for information and to begin the process of applying for PA. Applicants have 30 days after the date of the end of the Public Health Emergency to submit a [Request for Public Assistance form](#) through [FEMA Grants Portal](#) for processing. Schools then work with their emergency management partner to identify eligible uses of funding and on project formulation.

To support response to the COVID-19 Pandemic, FEMA is simplifying the PA application and funding process to address the magnitude of this event and allow local officials to receive eligible funding more quickly. FEMA is developing a simplified online form that applicants can complete, and on which they may explain work activities, answer basic questions, provide limited supporting documentation, and provide a cost estimate. FEMA and the recipient will review this information, follow up with limited requests for additional information if necessary, and award assistance. Recipients will have access to all projects in [PA Grants Portal](#), consistent with the traditional PA process. Local and state government officials should reach out, through their emergency operations center, to their state/tribal/territorial Public Assistance Officer to receive additional advice on potential eligibility and how to document costs incurred. The local or state government organization running the site may visit grantee.fema.gov to begin the reimbursement process.

Emergency Management Partners

As recommended in the [Guide for Developing High-Quality School Emergency Operations Plans \(School Guide\)](#) and [The Role of Districts in Developing High-Quality School Emergency Operations Plans \(District Guide\)](#), issued jointly by U.S. Departments of Education (ED); Justice (DOJ); Homeland Security (DHS); and Health and Human Services (HHS), collaboration is a



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critical component of school safety, security, emergency management and preparedness, before, during and after possible emergencies. Users can go to locate FEMA Regional Contacts through this [Web page](#), or visit the [REMS TA Center Interactive Map](#). The REMS TA Center map provides state-level, higher ed and K-12 school safety information such as state-specific information, resources, mandates and policies, as well as links to the various state/field offices of state partners with roles and responsibilities in school safety.

Related School Safety Planning Information and Resources

All practitioners with school safety responsibilities (education officials, first responders, planners, elected leadership) are encouraged to use the School Guide and District Guide to collaborate as well as create or revise and update existing plans as well as align their emergency planning practices with those at the national, state, and local levels. The guides provide the key principles of school emergency preparedness planning and an overview of a recommended six-step planning process for developing a high-quality school emergency operations plan (EOP). Planning teams can progress through the six steps as follows. After a planning team is formed ([Step 1: Form a Collaborative Planning Team](#)), the team may identify through assessments, such as culture and climate assessments and site assessments, that help to identify and prioritize threats and hazards to be addressed in the EOP ([Step 2: Understand the Situation](#)) understand the Situation. Goals can be created that identify desired outcomes for before, during, and after these incidents and objectives can be established that are specific and measurable actions to achieve those goals ([Step 3: Determine Goals and Objectives](#)). Courses of action are then developed to accomplish those objectives ([Step 4: Plan Development \(Identifying Courses of Action\)](#)) and form the basic plan, functional annexes, and hazard- and threat-specific annexes, and approved ([Step 5: Plan Preparation, Review, and Approval](#)). After sharing relevant sections of the plan with partners and stakeholders, the team conducts communication, training and exercise activities to help ensure everyone knows their roles and responsibilities. ([Step 6: Plan Implementation and Maintenance](#))

The REMS TA Center has created numerous interactive and non-interactive tools supporting planning and the multidisciplinary teams that work to keep schools safe every day. These tools can help schools assess, evaluate, and create comprehensive, high-quality school EOPs that address a range of threats and hazards:

- [EOP ASSESS](#) is an online, interactive tool that can help planning team members assess their current understanding of how to create a high-quality EOP. The tool asks a few questions about emergency planning and at the end provides a customized report, which provides information to help increase knowledge of the planning process and how to create an EOP.
- [EOP ASSIST 4.0 Software](#) can be hosted on a state's, district's or school's server and even a partner's server. The program directs planning team members through the



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processes that will result in the output of an editable, EOP resulting from applying the planning principles and processes put forth in the *School Guide*. When used to support more than one school, at the district and state level, the software includes a management dashboard along with dissemination functions. For more information on the software, its benefits and how it functions, please see our [webinar](#). An IT professional with an intermediate level of expertise or knowledge related to networking, Web server and database systems is needed to configure and install the software and the REMS TA Center offer a users' manual. As always, REMS staff are available to provide additional support if needed.

- [EOP ASSIST Interactive Workbook](#) is the low-tech version of the EOP ASSIST 3.0 Software. The Interactive Workbook has the same content as the software and is comprised of Word documents that can be filled out offline. The workbook also comes with a PDF set of instructions. Many planning teams use this during planning meetings and subsequently input the final narrative in EOP Assist.
- [EOP Evaluate](#) is a HTML-based tool that is designed to help schools and IHEs evaluate an established EOP. Tool users are prompted through the Federally recommended six-step planning process to determine strengths and areas to be further developed within the existing EOP and its annexes.
- [SITE ASSESS](#) our newest, free tool, is a mobile app for use on phones and tablets. It facilitates the school's multidisciplinary team walk-through with community partners. This safety assessment is important and helps users to gain a better understanding of the possible impacts of the hazards and threats facing schools alongside identifying priority safety activities for the building and campus. The customizable app builds from the principles of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED); universal access; disease transmission prevention; culture, climate and more. The app exports a customized report for users, which, when used by multiple schools and considered at the district and state levels, can help to inform budget, policy and program decisions. For more information, see our webinar, "[Conducting K-12 Site Assessments With SITE ASSESS Webinar](#)."

We hope that you find the information provided in this response helpful. If you have any additional questions or would like to continue the conversation, please do not hesitate to reply to this message. For additional resources and information on emergency preparedness, please visit the REMS TA Center [Website](#) or call us toll-free at 1-855-781-REMS [7367]. We also encourage you to follow us on [Twitter](#).

We appreciate you reaching out to us for assistance!

Sincerely,



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OSSS and the REMS TA Center team



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