Part II of KDE's Informational Packet for ARP-HCY Funds:

Best Practices for the American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief – Homeless Children and Youth (ARP-HCY)

The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 homeless funds are for the purposes of **identifying** homeless children and youth, providing **wraparound services** in light of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and providing assistance needed to enable homeless children and youth to **attend school** and **participate fully** in school activities, including **in-person instruction** and **summer learning and enrichment programs**.

The Kentucky Department of Education (KDE), Office of the State Homeless Coordinator offers this best practices document for the ARP-HCY funds for which all Kentucky districts are eligible to apply. These recommendations are intended to assist districts during the planning, application and program implementation processes—especially districts that may not have received McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Program funds in the past.

Best Practices Related to Conducting a Needs Assessment

Local educational agencies (LEAs) should analyze the needs of students experiencing homelessness considering the COVID-19 pandemic and its extraordinary impact.
- [Local Educational Agency Informal Needs Assessment](#) - This informal needs assessment tool provides a series of questions that local liaisons may use to determine the status of their services for homeless children and youth and to identify where to focus efforts to meet the most critical needs caused by the pandemic.

Best Practices Related to Funding Priorities: Planning for Using the Funds

LEAs have a unique opportunity with this funding to impact students experiencing homelessness through long-term, high-impact strategies. Homeless program liaisons should collaborate with their district's program, finance and administration staff through a data-driven decision-making process that drives their funding priorities and budgets.

Funding should address in-person instruction, acceleration and enrichment opportunities, and re-engagement and success strategies for return to school.
- LEAs must ensure that all costs are reasonable and necessary and that these uses of funds align with the purpose of the EHCY (Education of Homeless Children and Youth) program.
  - When considering whether a use of funds is allowable under the McKinney-Vento Act [section 723(d)(16)](#), LEAs should analyze the needs of students experiencing homelessness in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and its extraordinary impact.
- Allowable activities may include any expenses necessary to facilitate the identification, enrollment, retention and educational success of homeless children and youth, such as:

- Ensuring participation in summer programs, remediation, acceleration, enrichment and other planned activities (eliminate all barriers possible)
- Outreach to families and unaccompanied youth
- Contracted services (see specific examples below)
- Staffing - time, expertise and capacity for providing supplementary services
- "Defray the excess cost" of providing transportation to students experiencing homelessness [42 U.S.C. § 11433(d)(5)]

- ARP-HCY funds also can be used to provide **wraparound services** to students. Examples include:
  - Trauma-informed care; mental health services; social-emotional supports
  - Additional transportation costs due to the pandemic
  - Technology and cell phones
  - Access to reliable high-speed internet, devices/equipment; service plans; installation of community hot spots (ex: at shelters)
  - Short-term emergency housing that ensures a COVID-safe environment to remain engaged in school-related activities - **CAUTION (see housing** details below**)**
  - Purchasing store cards or pre-paid debit cards for student needs caused by the pandemic **CAUTION (see store card** details below**)**
  - CONTRACTED SERVICES
    - Tutoring - extra time and help through professional partners
    - Staffing - extra time / help; short-term staffing ("paid internship")
    - Consider building and sustaining long-term capacity support using Title I, Part A homeless set aside or McKinney-Vento subgrant funds. See question 15 in Part I of KDE's Informational Packet, ARP-HCY II Frequently Asked Questions for more information.
    - Community partnerships and collaboration may be beneficial in planning for services outside of school

- **Full participation and engagement are the overarching goal of all EHCY available funding** – so you should include typical allowable expenses as well as any other expenditures that address the extraordinary circumstances created by the COVID-19 pandemic.
  - Salary + benefits
  - Professional services (e.g., professional mental health and counseling services to address social, emotional and behavioral needs as well as social work services, public transportation services, community services, etc.)
  - Rentals of items needed to provide services (e.g., copier, car for transportation, etc.)
  - General supplies
  - Property
  - Indirect costs
- Think big...what would level the playing field?
- Consider working with a CBO (Community-Based Organization). Collaborating with a CBO can help support identification of students experiencing homelessness and improve services in the short-run and long-term by

To prepare staff in your schools and district to use your ARP-HCY II funds most effectively, take advantage of the free online professional development mini-courses KDE is offering. Courses take approximately 30 minutes to complete and are designed to heighten awareness and build capacity to respond to specific needs in the education of homeless children and youths. Specific courses are available for school and district positions such as administrators, staff who work with food service, enrollment, transportation and teachers. To see a complete list of the essential courses, go to McKinney-Vento.org and click "Individual Staff Courses." If you have questions or would like to provide the courses to staff in your district, email Brigette Stacy.

building the capacity of LEAs. CBOs can help LEAs to better provide wraparound services to underserved groups of students experiencing homelessness. The term "community-based organization" (CBO) means a public or private nonprofit organization of demonstrated effectiveness that—

A. is representative of a community or significant segments of a community; and
B. provides educational or related services to individuals in the community. - 20 U.S. Code § 7801 - Definitions

Caution

Wraparound Services: emergency housing - CAUTION
Use your ARP-HCY II funding for emergency housing with caution since it is most appropriate to use it for Unaccompanied Homeless Youth (UHY) or unsheltered families so they can access immediate safety AND connect with housing agencies in their area. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) was awarded the following ARP funds to address housing so limit your use of ARP-HCY II funds for housing to UHY or unsheltered families who are experiencing an emergency and are unable to connect with their local housing agency. Also, you should work with your Continuum of Care (CoC) so you can connect families to the appropriate housing agencies. Learn more about coordinated entry access through the Homeless and Housing Coalition of Kentucky. The National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE) has several valuable resources that will support your partnerships with your local housing agency.

- Five billion dollars in ARP was awarded through HUD for homelessness assistance including short-term housing / prevention, and another $5 billion was provided through HUD for emergency housing vouchers for those who are homeless. Also, between ARP and the December COVID-19 package,
- TOTAL $45 billion in rent relief was provided through ARP and previous COVID-19 relief funding.

In summary, districts should work to build connections with these agencies to serve families in need of emergency shelter and use ARP-HCY II funding only as a last resort.

Wraparound Services: store cards/pre-paid cards – CAUTION
Pre-paid cards that families can redeem at stores or gas stations can be a convenient way to meet student needs. However, they also present increased opportunity for fraud, theft, misuse and difficulty with accountability. They may be used in emergency situations but most of the time, instead of providing pre-paid cards consider the following options:

- Direct donors to help in the following ways:
  - Make a tax-deductible donation by sending a check to your district homeless education program.
  - Buy gift cards in any amount that enable parents and guardians to select their own items for their children and buy groceries.
  - Donate department store and grocery store gift cards in the amounts of $25 or $50
- Consider having the homeless program coordinator or homeless program staff use online ordering for basic needs.
- Remember - budgets can be amended, if necessary, to adjust for initial category requests.

Best Practices for Consortiums

A school district must generate an allocation of at least $5,000 through the ARP HCY II subgrant to receive those funds. Otherwise, the district must forfeit the funds or pool funds with other district(s) to meet the $5,000 minimum threshold. The district must still provide a free, appropriate public education to all students and ensure rights under the McKinney-Vento Act are met.

- The fiscal agent of the consortium should complete the ARP-HCY II homeless application and budget with input and collaboration with all member LEAs. Participation from all districts should occur to ensure that the consortium is providing assistance needed to enable homeless children and youth to attend school and participate fully in school activities, including in-person instruction and summer learning and enrichment programs. The fiscal agent will submit the completed application and budget in the Grants Management Application and Planning System (GMAP). All districts must complete a brief Intent to Participate, Program Details and Assurances pages in GMAP. The fiscal agent would then complete and submit the ARP-HCY II application and budget on behalf of the consortium.
- For more information about consortiums, review the "Recommendations for ARP-HCY II Consortiums" document KDE provided in the Informational Packet for ARP-HCY II Funds.

Best Practices for Completing Your District's Application in GMAP

Districts which generate less than $5,000 in funding under the ARP-HCY program may only receive funds by joining a consortium of districts in which the total pooled funds amount to $5,000 or more. If the allocation is less than $5,000, the district may choose to forfeit the funds or join a consortium. Whether applying for ARP-HCY funds as a standalone district, as a consortium, or declining the funds, all districts must complete a brief Intent to Participate. Any standalone district or consortium district who is accepting funds must also complete the Program Details and Assurances pages in GMAP (Grant Management and Application Planning System). GMAP is the system used by school districts to apply for and manage grant applications. GMAP also provides monitoring, approval and reporting functionality for KDE staff.

- Be sure to complete all sections of the application including the Intent to Participate, Program Details and Assurances pages. If applying for ARP-HCY II funding, districts operating standalone programs and fiscal agents of consortiums must complete and submit the budget and other application sections.
- Submit your district's application by the deadline.
- Make any requested revisions as soon as possible and address all revisions before resubmitting. You can email or call the KDE staff who reviewed your application to check your revisions in GMAP before you resubmit the application. This can help save time in the workflow process.
- Provide adequate narratives for program activities and budget items. Providing sufficient details will help avoid requests for additional information and can help speed up the approval process.
- Watch the upcoming GMAP overview video for tips on logging in and navigating GMAP, especially if you are a new user.
- If you have questions on items in the application, consult the "Help for Current Page" in GMAP (select from the menu on the left margin within the system). Help for Current Page provides details for each page of the application.

Best Practices for Effective Program Implementation and Stewardship of Funds

When your application has been approved, the funds will be available and you can begin to implement the activities in the approved application. As you implement the program activities, keep the following best practices in mind:

- Make program processes and procedures clear to staff. For example, staff should understand and follow the process to be used if they suspect a student may be experiencing homelessness, or to purchase items for the homeless program.
- Ensure district fiscal processes are documented and are followed. This will help ensure funds are used appropriately and will help avoid waste.

- Provide training to staff on program requirements. To prepare staff in your schools and district to use your ARP-HCY II funds most effectively, take advantage of the free professional development KDE is offering, as described in the sidebar on p. 2 of this document.
- Ensure sufficient resources are in place to manage the program. While these additional funds are needed and can benefit students experiencing homelessness, with the supplementary funds come an increased workload and responsibility for oversight. Ensure there is sufficient staff with capacity to manage the increased funds.
- Monitor progress toward meeting program goals. Meet with staff regularly to review data, assess progress and effectiveness. Adjust program activities as needed.
- When substantive changes are made to program activities or spending, revise the application and budget in GMAP.
- Be sure to keep documentation in case your district is selected for monitoring. Important documentation to keep could include items such as meeting agendas in which progress toward EHCY (Education of Homeless Children and Youth) goals and budgets are discussed, documented processes and procedures, and time and effort records (if applicable).
- More information about monitoring can be found in the "American Rescue Plan-Homeless Children and Youth II Frequently Asked Questions and the Recommendations for ARP-HCY II Consortiums" documents KDE provided in the Informational Packet for ARP-HCY Funds.

Additional Tips for Supporting Homeless Children and Youths

- **Create a welcoming climate and build trust with all students.**
  Many homeless students hesitate to identify themselves as homeless due to shame, fear of stigma and concern about possible consequences of this identification. By not being identified, however, these students miss out on critical supports. Building a safe and supportive environment in your school or classroom can benefit all students and alleviate these concerns for homeless students.

- **Help to identify and support homeless students.**
  While it is important to avoid jumping to conclusions about students due to their appearance or performance, there are often warning signs that a child or youth is experiencing homelessness. For example, a child may fall asleep repeatedly in class, wear the same clothes multiple days in a row, have poor hygiene, fail to complete homework, or be regularly late or absent. Instead of punishing a student for these behaviors, it would be beneficial to get to the root cause and find out what supports you may be able to provide.

- **Be sensitive and understanding.**
  Many homeless youths experience trauma even before they become homeless, and the experience of homelessness can expose youths to violence, abuse, trafficking and other traumatic experiences (including hunger and illness). Teachers and other school staff who deal directly with children should always employ sensitivity and understanding in conversations with homeless students. School leaders can help by ensuring that all staff members are trained in trauma-informed care.

- **Ensure that school and classroom policies and procedures, such as disciplinary policies, are fair to homeless students and do not negatively impact them because of their homelessness.**
  Consider providing extra time or other accommodations for homeless students on homework and projects, or extra resources that may be needed, such as access to printers, computers and school supplies. Review attendance policies to ensure that they do not disproportionately punish homeless students, who may face difficulty arriving on time to school.

Source: Supporting the Success of Homeless Children and Youths, U.S. Department of Education, 2016.

Best Practices Resources

- [15 Effective Strategies for Dropout Prevention](#)
- [Accelerating Student Learning During Summer Learning Programs and Through the Academic Year](#)
- [CCSSO 2021 Summer Learning and Enrichment: State Guidance for District and School Leaders](#)
- [Don't Quit on Me – Dropout Prevention Report](#)
- [Educating All Learners](#)
- [Engaging Highly Mobile and At-Risk Students](#)
- [How to Use American Rescue Plan Act K-12 Education Funds to Identify and Support Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness](#)
- [Improving Equity in and Access to Quality CTE Programs for Students Experiencing Homelessness](#)
- [Kentucky's Persistence to Graduation Brief](#)
- [Kentucky's Trauma-Informed Toolkit](#)
- [Learning Recovery: How to Develop and Implement Effective Tutoring Programs](#)
- [NCHE Best Practices and Resources](#)
- [Overview of U.S. Department of Education Guidance on American Rescue Plan Act Funds for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness](#)
- [Safer Schools and Campuses Best Practices Clearinghouse](#)
- [School Reopening and Recovery: Considerations for Serving Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness](#)
- [School and Public Libraries](#)
- [Social, Emotional and Behavioral Learning and Trauma-Informed Practice](#)
- [Summer Learning and Enrichment Collaborative](#)
- [Summer Support](#)
- [Summer Support: Information and Printables for Parents and Caregivers](#)
- [Supporting In-School and Out-of-School Youth Experiencing Homelessness Through Education and Workforce Partnerships](#)
- [Student and Family Reengagement Learning Series](#)
- [What Works Clearinghouse](#)

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[1] https://schoolhouseconnection.org/lost-in-the-masked-shuffle-and-virtual-void/
[2] For the definition of homelessness under the Education of Homeless Children and Youth program, see https://nche.ed.gov/determining-eligibility/.