

U.S. Department of Education

State Plan for the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARP Act) Homeless Children and Youth (HCY) Program

CFDA Number: 84.425W



1. How the SEA has used or will use up to 25 percent of funds awarded under ARP Homeless I for State-level activities to provide training, technical assistance, capacity-building, and engagement at the State and LEA levels, including support to LEAs to increase access to summer programming in 2021. This must include how the SEA has supported LEAs to plan for and provide wrap-around services, in collaboration with State and local agencies for immediate needs this spring 2021, and how it will support LEAs for school year 2021-2022. This should include the extent to which the SEA has or plans to build capacity in LEAs that have not received an EHCY subgrant in the past in order to ensure that these LEAs are well-prepared to utilize the funds provided in ARP Homeless II;

The Maine Department of Education has provided training, technical assistance, capacity-building, and engagement at the State and LEA levels in various ways. Monthly or twice per month McKinney-Vento office hours to allow LEAs to network, ask questions and get technical assistance, regular virtual training sessions with community partners and guest speakers, a weekly McKinney-Vento Listserv, and continuous technical assistance through phone calls, emails, and website updates occurred in the spring and summer of 2021.

Hundreds of Maine educators have joined hours of live webinars, office hours, or watched recordings over the spring and summer relating to McKinney-Vento. The Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) Coordinator has provided hundreds of technical assistance calls and emails to support LEAs, Community-Based Organizations, and families and students regarding questions related to eligibility, best interest determinations, immediate enrollment, liaison responsibilities, transportation, unaccompanied youth, services, and rights of McKinney-Vento students. Dozens of McKinney-Vento update emails have been sent through the list serv to liaisons, educators, and community partners, and the messages included opportunities for professional development, community resources, and relevant and timely news updates from the ME DOE, US ED, and other partners.

The state coordinator has provided extensive support to LEAs with current subgrants and those without, regarding technical assistance and training. One initiative this spring and summer included targeted support to the Maine Indian Education schools after a data analysis revealed low McKinney-Vento identification numbers and significant migrant education identification numbers. Recognizing how these populations can often overlap and face similar problems of housing instability, the Maine Department of Education prioritized targeted support to Maine Indian Education. This project included a personalized presentation to their leadership, various communications with the United States Bureau of Indian Education, personalized materials, and continuous technical assistance as needed. This targeted support has been made available to all LEAs, with particular calls and emails to those who applied for subgrants and were not awarded, along with current and new subgrantees. The State Coordinator has done frequent personalized McKinney-Vento virtual and recorded presentations for LEAs, community partners, and other groups throughout the spring and summer, partnering with local liaisons. The state coordinator joined with the Office of Federal Relief Aid to offer a live and recorded webinar and later made it available for LEAs regarding ARP-HCY I and II. Through targeted outreach, the state coordinator engaged in and encouraged conversations regarding the creation of consortia for districts for ARP HCY II, including virtual breakout rooms in webinars based on regions. The

Office of the State Coordinator offered monthly McKinney-Vento Orientation / Refresher Zoom sessions open and available to any school staff and recorded and made those recordings available. These training sessions allow districts without subgrants to understand the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, identification strategies, see sample materials, and hear from other liaisons about their experiences. The recordings also are made available to supplement the professional development that liaisons are providing in their LEAs.

Additionally, in partnership with the Maine DOE data team and helpdesk, the state coordinator offered a live webinar on documenting homeless status in district and state student information systems and recorded that session for future viewing. These virtual learning and networking opportunities were broadly advertised on the Maine DOE website, newsroom, McKinney-Vento listserv, and more. These training sessions have been held at a wide range of times to ensure school staff with different roles and schedules can join.

The Office also created a “McKinney-Vento Roadmap” and made that available to liaisons and all school staff to support the development and improvement of homeless programming in districts. The “McKinney-Vento Roadmap” was also covered in a statewide, recorded webinar posted on the MV website. This resource is a manageable step-by-step guide for LEAs to develop and improve their McKinney-Vento programming. It covers compliance basics and encourages districts to include many recognized best practices and expand their programming. This resource has proven to be essential and very appreciated by LEAs who have not previously received a subgrant, those who have had a recent turnover in the liaison role, and those looking for some guidance on getting started. The ME DOE MV website was updated to include new materials from the National Center for Homeless Education, SchoolHouse Connection, MaineHousing, and other community partners.

Due to the quick turnaround of the federal funds, this work was started with regular MV funds and other state funds. The SEA made it clear to LEAs that it is allowable to use ARP-HCY funds to reimburse back to March 13, 2020, when the national emergency was declared. This communication has been shared and clarified in webinars, technical assistance calls, written communication with the McKinney-Vento listserv, and included in contract documents.

As for engagement, the Maine Department of Education has used this opportunity to reengage students and families, especially those receiving remote learning services. This has also included a specific emphasis on student groups such as homeless children and youth who are also immigrant, migrant, English Learners, etc., and the required collaboration with various state offices and agencies. The Maine Department of Education has updated Maine-specific outreach materials and will continue to improve and translate materials for schools to reach a broader audience with McKinney-Vento awareness resources.

The Maine Department of Education plans to continue to provide training, technical assistance, capacity-building, and engagement at the State and LEA levels. Primarily through its role contracting with three homeless providers who are uniquely positioned in the State to identify and provide services for homeless children and youth. These three organizations were recently awarded contracts through the Maine Department of Health and Human Services to support youth experiencing homelessness. With the support of the ARP-HCY funds, these groups are

tasked with the identification and outreach of homeless children, youth, and families, connecting them to LEAs and educationally related supports, providing wrap-around services, and training to all LEAs in their region. A comprehensive training and targeted technical assistance plan will be developed. The plan will include McKinney-Vento and each organization's respective specialties, including supporting historically underserved populations like LGBTQ+, students of color, English Learners, motivational interviewing, effective street outreach strategies, etc.

Additionally, the Maine Department of Education will contract with another community-based organization to provide similar services specifically to prioritize immigrant communities throughout the State. This collaboration will include detailed prioritization of outreach to students and families of color and English Learners and the provision of wrap-around services, as this organization already does. This contractor will also deliver training and professional development to LEAs regarding cultural responsiveness and trauma-informed care.

An anticipated contract will be with a Tribal health community-based organization to provide specific outreach, identification, wrap-around services, and service provision to Tribal students and youth who qualify under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Act. This contractor will also deliver training and professional development to LEAs regarding cultural responsiveness and trauma-informed care.

All subcontractors will conduct monthly check-ins with the liaison in all LEAs in their dedicated region. These check-ins will serve as a space to discuss any referrals, needs, and opportunities for McKinney-Vento students in the region. Subcontractors will complete, at a minimum, annual family needs assessments with any families and youth identified for McKinney-Vento. They will also complete an annual school needs assessment in conjunction with the liaison and educators working with the children and youth, and assist the school in creating a student service plan. These initiatives will foster relationships between the community-based organizations and schools, and to develop resources that will continue in the future. These efforts will lay the groundwork for a system that can exist to support McKinney-Vento students beyond the American Rescue Plan funding.

All subcontractors will work together with the Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) State Coordinator and hired EHCY Program Coordinator. The Program Coordinator will coordinate monthly check-in meetings of all subcontractors and relevant SEA staff and review and report quarterly happenings for the ARP-HCY funds. This position will also be tasked with developing and implementing a training plan to include regional in-person and virtual meetings with liaisons and stakeholders over the next three years. The training plan will include topics from each contractor, relevant community partners, and direct technical assistance support. Such dedicated staff time will build capacity at the SEA level and support the capacity building and engagement at LEAs. This position will specifically be tasked with supporting the LEAs who had not received EHCY subgrants in the past and to ensure they are well-prepared to use ARP-HCY II funds. In partnership with the EHCY State Coordinator, this individual will also provide on-site and remote professional development and training opportunities for LEA staff and in conjunction with McKinney-Vento liaisons. Combined, these efforts will drastically increase the available support to McKinney-Vento liaisons and build capacity at the LEA levels through shared efforts of identification, outreach, wrap-around services, and professional development and technical assistance. The EHCY program coordinator will also create a

community of liaisons, both regionally and statewide, to encourage continued collaboration and support. This was emphasized in the [Maine ARP ESSER State Plan](#): “Additional support is needed for SAUs to increase the capacity of identifying students who are experiencing homelessness as many SAUs in Maine are rural and small with limited staff time dedicated to the identification process. Engage statewide McKinney-Vento Coordinators in meetings and professional learning to be able to establish a network of peers serving as resources but also supporting the development of statewide informational materials for schools, students, families and community members about available assistance and support.” (Page 10).

2. How the SEA has used or will use their funds for State-level activities to provide support to LEAs to increase access to summer programming and plan for and provide wrap-around services for summer 2021, in collaboration with State and local agencies and other community-based organizations; and

The SEA has used their funds for State-level activities to support LEAs to increase access to summer programming and wrap-around services. The SEA collaborated closely with the Maine Department of Health and Human Services to ensure the efforts by both state agencies were maximizing their impacts by appropriately addressing the needs of the populations. These efforts included collaboration with DHHS subgrantees supporting homeless children and youth with summer programming and wrap-around services through those funds. The ARP-HCY I state set aside directly supports these organizations and builds their capacity to continue the started outreach and service provision and establish a more direct communication link between these organizations and the schools. This work will better connect students and families to summer and before or after-school programming, wrap-around services, and collaboration with state and local agencies and other community-based organizations.

The Office of the State Coordinator also assisted with various state pilots, including the MOOSE development project, the department-wide Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee, Re-imagining Remote Education Ventures, and School Resource Officers Mandatory Training. The McKinney-Vento State Coordinator participated in many meetings to develop materials and provide regular technical assistance to ensure the pilots were relevant and respectful for all students – including those facing housing instability. The State Coordinator led various presentations about the unique challenges that McKinney-Vento students face and, through this work, increased outreach, identification, and wrap-around services to these students, especially in light of challenges from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Capacity-building and collaboration occurred with dozens of community partners over the spring and summer of 2021, to educate communities about the McKinney-Vento Act and eligible students. The collaboration included partners like the Maine Housing Committee, 4EveryKid, Maine Continuum of Care, Maine Youth Action Board, Youth Homelessness Demonstration Project, Statewide Student Homeless Prevention Team, Positive Youth Development Institute, Region 3 Care Team, Farmworker Resource Network, and many more.

Other collaboration internally within the SEA included Interagency Coordinating Council with The Office for Special Services, Migrant Education Program, Family Engagement, Cultural

Responsiveness, Social-Emotional Learning, Mental Health, Culture Climate Resilience Team, Office of School and Student Supports, Federal Programs Team, the ME DOE Legislative Team, early childhood education, and many more. This collaboration included an increased awareness of the unique challenges that children and youth who are experiencing housing instability face.

Because of the quick turnaround on these funds, the LEAs did not receive their ARP HCY I disbursements until August 2021. LEAs are familiar with the allowable uses of these funds and ESSER and have received significant technical assistance and support regarding these funding streams. LEAs awarded ARP HCY I funds were notified in July and made aware that these funds can be used for allowable uses dating back to March 13, 2020. Effective training has been included in webinars, listservs, and DOE media articles regarding funding streams.

3. How the SEA has used or will use at least 75 percent of funds awarded under ARP Homeless I for distribution to LEAs in accordance with all requirements of EHCY. This must include the extent to which the SEA has or will use funds to supplement existing EHCY subgrants to allow for more rapid fund distribution to address the needs of students experiencing homelessness, and the extent to which the SEA analyzed and reviewed where there are significant concentrations of students and families experiencing homelessness across the State (including in LEAs that are not existing EHCY subgrantees), and how it has or will ensure that supports from ARP Homeless I can urgently reach them.

The SEA will use at least 75 percent of funds awarded under ARP HCY I for distribution to LEAs who completed the streamlined application. This application was open to any LEA who had identified a significant need and applied for McKinney-Vento funds in 2020 (a total of 26 fiscal sponsor LEAs). Fifteen LEAs applied for these funds and were awarded their total request. The fiscal agents represented multiple LEAs, so the total is 18 LEAs this will directly impact. The application was streamlined, and the turnaround process was quick. These LEAs cover approximately 46% of the identified homeless children and youth in the State over the past three years. For the LEAs who were not existing EHCY subgrantees, six LEAs had identified a need and were eligible to complete the application. Of those six, all LEAs completed it and were awarded 100% of their requested funds.

ii. **For ARP Homeless II:**

4. How the SEA will use up to 25 percent of funds awarded under ARP Homeless II for State-level activities to provide training, technical assistance, capacity-building, and engagement at the State and LEA levels, including support to LEAs to plan for and provide wrap-around services, in collaboration with State and local agencies, for school year 2021-2022; and

These funds were combined with ARP-HCY I state-level activities to award the contracts to the previously mentioned community-based organizations: three homeless youth services providers, one immigrant-focused mental health provider, one tribal health organization, and one project coordinator role.

The SEA plans to implement a strategic outreach and targeted technical assistance plan in partnership with these community-based organizations, which will focus on:

- Multiple direct contacts with each LEA to provide tailored assistance;
- Expanding on the community of liaisons and community partners that has been used to improve identification, including at a minimum, quarterly regional meetings, with statewide monthly meetings;
- Creating gatherings of similar LEAs for peer-based learning, inter-district workgroups, and possible mentoring from LEAs with strong McKinney-Vento programs;
- Developing and delivering interactive virtual live and recorded training opportunities;
- Working with LEAs to create individualized identification action plans and facilitating introductions to valuable community partners in their regions;
- Developing and disseminating user-friendly identification tools (such as a script for registrars, posts for social media and websites, training for school-based staff, videos, etc.);
- Soft skills training to improve how school staff talk about inadequate housing and sharing housing in culturally sensitive ways that encourage families and youth to share their stories.

5. How the SEA will use at least 75 percent of funds awarded under ARP Homeless II for distribution to LEAs in accordance with the final requirements. This must include a description of how the SEA will distribute funds in accordance with the required formula to address the needs of students experiencing homelessness and the extent to which the SEA has encouraged or will encourage the creation of consortia for those LEAs that may not meet the required minimum formula amount.

The SEA followed the described formula to provide LEAs with an estimated amount of disbursement under ARP HCY II funds. Estimates were shared broadly and published on the ME DOE's website and sent out in a Priority Notice. The ME DOE hosted a live webinar for LEAs to explain this process and provide breakout rooms for LEAs to connect, based on region, and consider creating consortia and exchanging information understanding which other LEAs are facing the same situation. The SEA provided technical assistance and matchmaking for LEAs to find partnerships to create consortia. This webinar was recorded and made widely available through the Maine DOE's website, YouTube page, and McKinney-Vento website. LEAs are required to complete a very brief form to acknowledge receipt and allowable uses of these funds and submit information if applying as a fiscal sponsor within a consortium.

The formula followed was based on the [Final Requirements: American Rescue Plan Act Homeless Children and Youth Program](#): "Based equally on the proportional share of an LEA's allocation under Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) for the most recent fiscal year, and the LEA's proportional share of the number of homeless children and youth identified by each LEA relative to all LEAs in the State, using the greater of the number of homeless children and youth in either the 2018-19 or 2019-20 school year in each LEA. This formula ensures a balance in the distribution of funds to focus on the needs of the

LEAs, considering both the LEA's number of low-income students and the number of homeless children and youth. In addition, allowing the use of either the 2018-19 school year or 2019-20 school year homeless counts takes into consideration the potential for undercounting in the 2019-20 school year due to COVID-19 by allowing LEAs to use the greater of the two numbers. The Department establishes in paragraph (c)(2) that an LEA must have an allocation of at least \$5,000 under the formula to be eligible for an ARP Homeless II subgrant on its own. This \$5,000 minimum will enable each subgrantee to have sufficient ARP Homeless II funds to address the needs of homeless children and youth. We chose as the threshold the smallest amount reasonable to sufficiently implement a local program. If an LEA's allocation would be less than \$5,000, in order to receive an ARP Homeless II subgrant, the LEA must join a consortium of LEAs in which the sum of its members' allocations meets the \$5,000 threshold. For LEAs with an allocation less than \$5,000, the rule encourages the use of consortia to create favorable economies of scale.”

Estimated allocation amounts ranged from under \$5,000 to \$158,393. These funds will be disbursed as grant awards through the Grants Electronic Management System (GEMS) with the ME DOE. GEMS is an electronic grant management system that LEAs are familiar with and have worked with for many years. LEAs will upload budgets and submit invoices for reimbursement through this system, and the EHCY State Coordinator, Office of School and Student Supports Director, and the Director of the Federal Relief Aid Office will review all invoices to ensure they are reasonable, allowable, and necessary costs.

For both ARP Homeless I and ARP Homeless II:

6. How the SEA will ensure that ARP-HCY supplements the support and services provided with ARP ESSER funds and does not replace the use of ARP ESSER funds to support the needs of students experiencing homelessness;

From the [Maine ARP ESSER State Plan](#): “The Maine Department of Education is supporting blended and braided with other federal, State and local funding sources to create a sustainable funding strategy and more effectively leverage multiple funding streams toward a common goal. Our teams, which include the ESEA Federal Programs, the School Finance Team, Office of Special Services and the McKinney-Vento Coordinator have created opportunities to discuss overlapping concerns and ways to identified statewide needs that might be supported with multiple funding sources to maximize the investment. The Department also provides additional information to our SAUs about braiding and blending funding to avoid the financial COVID cliff.” (Page 30).

The Department’s Office of Federal Relief Aid and the Office for Education of Homeless Children and Youth collaborate regularly and ensure that LEAs are provided ample information regarding the different funding streams. Resources from SchoolHouse Connection have been shared with LEAs to provide notices about the supplementary nature of these funds. In the ARP HCY I application, LEAs were required to provide information about alternative funding sources for their homeless education programs.

Webinars offered by the ME DOE provide repeated messaging about different funding streams, and EHCY office staff do individually review any invoices for this programming. Webinars are recorded and posted to the Maine DOE's YouTube page and the ME DOE's McKinney-Vento website. Information is also broadly shared through ME DOE Priority Notices and the ME DOE McKinney-Vento Listserv to all liaisons in the State, along with other interested community partners. Additionally, LEAs are required to attest that ARP-HCY funds will be supplemental to the ESSER funds prior to receiving funding.

7. The extent to which the SEA will use its State-level activities funds to award subgrants or contracts to community-based organizations that are well-positioned to identify children and youth experiencing homelessness in historically underserved populations such as rural children and youth, Tribal children and youth, students of color, children and youth with disabilities, English learners, LGBTQ+ youth, and pregnant, parenting, or caregiving students experiencing homelessness, and connect them to educationally-related support and wrap-around services; and

The SEA selected which Community-Based Organizations to work with because of their unique positions in their communities. The three regional youth homeless providers in the State are well-versed in the identification and provision of services to children and youth living in rural environments (as much of the State is rural), children and youth with disabilities, LGBTQ+ youth, and pregnant, parenting, or caregiving students experiencing homelessness. These organizations are prepared to address each population specifically and provide targeted professional development to partner organizations and LEAs on the complexities and nuances of each population. One of these providers is also a Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program site and leads the State's Youth Action Board. The ME DOE plans to incorporate the YAB in as much training and outreach as possible to incorporate youth voices with lived experiences to guide this work.

Additionally, the ME DOE decided to contract with a well-recognized and valued community-based organization that primarily serves immigrant students, English Learners, and students with disabilities. Their staff is prepared to use their unique skillsets and experiences to educate liaisons and school communities about multilingual children and youth experiencing homelessness.

And finally, the anticipated partnership with a Tribal health organization is instrumental to ensuring the historically underserved population of Tribal children and youth are included in these projects. This organization's mission is to provide community-driven, culturally centered public health and social services to all Wabanaki communities and people while honoring Wabanaki cultural knowledge, cultivating innovation, and fostering collaboration. This organization serves four federally recognized tribes in five communities: the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians, the Aroostook Band of Micmac, the Passamaquoddy Tribe at Indian Township, the Passamaquoddy Tribe at Pleasant Point, and the Penobscot Nation. Services are available to community members living on and off-reservation across the State of Maine. This organization is uniquely positioned because they are already doing this work and have been for many years. This contract will be a natural extension of their work into the schools and use their unique voice and experience to provide valuable professional development to districts.

8. How the SEA will encourage LEAs to award contracts to community-based organizations to help identify and support historically underserved populations experiencing homelessness.

The SEA will continue to host webinars and provide technical assistance to support LEAs in awarding contracts to community-based organizations to help identify and support historically underserved populations experiencing homelessness. Close collaboration with the SEA contractors will connect LEAs with local resources in each of their local communities. The SEA will develop a resource list to share with LEAs and encourage developing, maintaining, and improving relationships and collaboration with these CBOs and state and local agencies. The program coordinator will invite key stakeholders to regional meetings to meet and support the work of LEAs. This work has already begun through the assistance of AmeriCorps volunteers at the Maine Department of Education.

The SEA will use its state-level activities funds to award contracts to community-based organizations tasked with providing comprehensive professional development and technical assistance to LEAs throughout the State. A three-year plan for targeted professional development in every LEA will be organized in the Fall of 2021. Additionally, the organizations will support identification, outreach, and wrap-around services for homeless children and youth throughout their assigned regions or statewide. Monthly meetings will bring together staff members from all contracted organizations to ensure coordination and progress. Their professional development sessions to LEAs, which will include offering PD to every LEA in the State over the three years, will include resources on serving students from historically underserved populations. These training sessions will include referring LEAs to local resources in their communities and making connections to encourage further collaboration and mutual support.