

AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN – EDUCATION FOR HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH  
**PART B: PROGRAMMATIC, FISCAL, AND REPORTING ASSURANCES**

The Chief State School Officer or his/her authorized representative assures the following:

- a. Funds awarded under this application (ARP Homeless II) will adhere to the final requirements at <https://oese.ed.gov/files/2021/07/EO-12866-OESE-FY-21-NFR-ARP-HCY-with-disclaimer.docx>.
- b. The SEA will award at least 75% of its total allocation to LEAs, based on the formula set out in the final requirements. The funds remaining after subgrants are made to LEAs may be used by the Office of the State Coordinator for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth for State-level activities as reflected in sections 722(f) and (g) of the McKinney-Vento Act.
- c. The SEA will comply with, and ensure that LEAs comply with, all reporting requirements at such time and in such manner and containing such information as the Secretary may reasonably require, including but not limited to the requirements under the McKinney-Vento Act, and including but not limited to numbers of students experiencing homelessness identified and supported through ARP-HCY funding, and specific details about supports and services received by students.
- d. Within 60 days from publication of this application, the SEA will submit a plan to [HomelessED@ed.gov](mailto:HomelessED@ed.gov) that contains the following information:
  - i. For **ARP Homeless I**:
    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;

Through the Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program (EHCY), the Puerto Rico Department of Education (PRDE) seeks to ensure that all homeless children and youth have equal access to the same free and appropriate public education, including preschool public education, which children and young people with a home have. As part including preschool public of these efforts, the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act included an unprecedented \$ 800 million reserve within the Elementary and Secondary Schools Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER) program, to support the specific and urgent needs of children and youth homeless in recognition of the impact that the 2019 Coronavirus pandemic has had on those students. PRDE will continue to refer to the programs under ARP providing aid to homeless children and youth as ARP Homeless I and II or ARP – HCY, throughout this document.

To serve the purposes of the ARP Act, PRDE plans to use part of 25 percent of the funds awarded under ARP Homeless I to increase its capacity to serve homeless children and youth by hiring Coordinators to Bayamón, Caguas and Ponce Regions which in the past two years have had the higher numbers of eligible students identified. These coordinators will be responsible for coordinating services to this population and arranging the foundations for the establishment of alliances between PRDE and community-based organizations. Also, PRDE will need to hire administrative personnel that, at the State Level, will collaborate in the administration of these funds, will perform reports and will assist the program coordinator with visiting and evaluating that the services are being provided adequately throughout the Island. Additionally, they could improve PRDE's ability to identify and respond to specific needs that could arise during this school year, due to the pandemic, by implementing one of the allowable activities under the program.

Between the purposes of the ARP Homeless Fund, we can find the following: to help States identify homeless children and youth, provide comprehensive services that address the multiple effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on homeless children and youth, and ensure that homeless children and youth can attend school and fully participate in school activities. PRDE recognizes that maintaining virtual classes and physical distancing due to the pandemic has limited the identification of homeless students by teachers, social workers, counselors, and other school and regional personnel. Given this, during the 2021-2022 school year, PRDE plans to carry out outreach activities aimed at identifying homeless students who have not yet received Program services and are in need. The activity will consist of sending communications to the school communities, guiding them on the identification and referral of these students to the Program. Likewise, PRDE will employ efforts such as through the press and other announcements in newspapers, to inform the community in general about the services offered by the Program, and the places and processes to request them.

In the case of the southwest area specifically, due to the earthquakes registered since January 2020, many families had to leave their homes, becoming homeless families. Appropriately, it's imperative to reinforce student identification activities in that geographic area. For this, it is planned to hire at least one liaison who will work directly and closely with the municipalities and community-based organizations, in the identification of the students who are part of these families, and that are from the southwest area that was affected.

Maintaining virtual classes and physical distancing for a period of approximately one year has also significantly limited the socio-educational and cultural experiences among the students of the "Homeless" Program. Although PRDE received the ARP Homeless grant on April 2021 to address these needs, these grants could not be used until an authorization was granted by the USDE Secretary on June of 2021. Thus, Homeless Children and Youth could not be directly impacted during the summer with ARP Homeless I funds. However, the program did offer summer services for academic reinforcement based on the unique needs of eligible participants collected by regional program staff with the McKinney Vento Homeless and Assistance grant.

Finally, as part of the comprehensive services that will be offered to this population during de 2021-2022 school year, PRDE plans to carry out training activities that are planned to support personnel who offer services to this population. Among these personnel, at least 60 Social Workers, and professionals from the Counseling area of the schools and shelters

have been identified to participate from the professional development activities. The mentioned staff work with the purpose of supporting the processes and efforts of the program and by offering socioemotional services to the eligible students. Some of the training topics that PRDE plans to offer to these personnel are the following:

- Promote physical, mental, social and emotional well-being of students
  - Promote alliances for support networks
  - Innovation and entrepreneurship
  - Method for promoting the healing of children and young people after the emergency of Covid-19 with the integration of art or music therapy (how to work with traumas)
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 wraparound services for summer 2021, in collaboration with State and local agencies and other community-based organizations; and

PRDE received the ARP Homeless I grant on April 23, 2021. However, due to specific conditions governing the grants that we receive from the United States Department of Education (USDE), we were not able to use grants covered, until an authorization was granted by the USDE Secretary on June 2021. Considering this fact, during the 2021 summer period, the Homeless Children and Youth program was not able to provide support to the summer programming with ARP Homeless I funds.

However, the program did offer summer services for academic reinforcement based on the eligible participants unique needs that was collected by the regional personnel of the program with the McKinney Vento Homeless and Assistance grant.

Additionally, the program participants were offered to participate from the summer initiative carried out with the Elementary and Secondary Schools Emergency Relief Funds under CRRSA (known as ESSER II). Nevertheless, the students that were eligible to participate from the ESSER II summer initiative were those that failed the previous academic year, and the purpose of the program was to provide additional learning remedial courses. The goal was to undergo a process to validate the courses they were going to take during the summer, for those students that failed to have the opportunity to approve the basics of the previous grade subject courses (and be able to enroll in the next grade for this academic year).

In the case of the homeless students, they couldn't participate from the ESSER II summer program, since there were no known students that failed the previous academic year at that historic time.

On the other, the ARP Homeless I (and II) program indeed project to provide financial support to offer summer programs for the eligible participants on the 2022 summer period, in collaboration with community-based organizations to attend the needs of this population. During the summer, PRDE expects to provide additional continuation learning time and socioemotional services to the homeless children and youth in need, to ensure they have all the necessary tools to continue to succeed. Moreover, PRDE could add additional services based on the necessities that could arise in the future from the

consequences of the COVID-19 disease, taking into consideration also additional participants.

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 PRDE will use at least 75 percent of funds awarded under ARP Homeless I for distribution to schools, shelters, and regions in accordance with the requirements of EHCY. The funds will be used to address the needs of the homeless students by providing the following activities:

- Coordination of services by social workers from the regional educational offices (ORE by its acronym in Spanish) to refer students from schools and shelters to psychological services for social and emotional evaluations and treatment in the intervention of crisis or trauma situations (such as the experienced COVID-19 pandemic).
- Integration of subjects such as physical education, family and consumer, and fine arts in the offering of various activities related to workshops, including developing the creation of home gardens, crafts and cooking classes.

During academic year 2019-2020, the PRDE identified the regions with the highest concentration of homeless students and will continue to pay special attention to Ponce and Caguas (in that ranking order), to ensure that ARP Homeless I support can continue to identify these areas for additional participants, to make sure that the aid needed arrive urgently. In the case of academic year 2020-2021, the Caguas and Bayamón regions (in that ranking order) have the higher numbers of eligible students identified, which provided valuable information for PRDE to concentrate on additional identification and services, as needed in the mentioned regions. Plus, PRDE believes in data driven determinations, so where there are higher concentrations of homeless children and youth, additional interventions can be considered based on the needs that will continue to be gather.

ii. For **ARP Homeless II**:

1. 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;

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, students experiencing homelessness have remained underserved by schools, and States, which sometimes opted to provide the basic services due to lack of resources, organizational coordination, preparations and/or

infrastructure ready to continue services while in long-term closures. For the purpose of complementing the supports and services provided with ARP ESSER funds to support the needs of homeless students, with the funds awarded under ARP Homeless II for State-level activities, PRDE plan to provide Professional Development for educators and specialized instructional support personnel that are designed to heighten the understanding and sensitivity of such personnel to the needs of homeless children and youths, the rights of such children and youths in regards to educational and other school services, and the specific educational needs of runaway and homeless youths. School officials are those who work in direct contact with students, so at the State Level it is a priority to be able to reinforce the professional development that these personnel are or will receive through ARP ESSER funds, with training that empower them with the tools to help address the emotional and academic needs of homeless students that resulted from the COVID-19 emergency. Among the personnel identified, it is projected to impact at least 280 officials of the Regional Educational Offices, such as directors of schools and shelters, and teachers; as well parents and/or legal guardians of the students. Some of the training topics that PRDE expect to offer to these participants are the following:

- Creating awareness and sensitivity to the needs of homeless children and youth, including identification of possible medical needs that may interfere with proper academic performance
- Needs and rights of homeless children and youth
- Promoting emotional health in academic return
- Understanding and identifying traumatic stress and support networks to attend the needs
- Interventions and supports for positive behavior
- Promoting and identifying support groups and advocates of the rights of homeless children and youth in the community
- Factors that make learning difficult for this population

In the specific case of Teachers, we have identified that they have a need to offer them with tools that can help them in the teaching-learning process, so it is planned to provide them training in the following topics:

- Use of technology in the teaching/learning processes
- Educational framework or tiered support to students
- Differentiation strategy to improve the instruction of the reading and writing (coaching)
- Differentiation in the instruction of mathematical skills

With the ARP Homeless I and II programs, PRDE also project to provide financial support to offer summer programs for the eligible participants on the 2022 summer period.

2. 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 PRDE will use at least 75 percent of funds awarded under ARP Homeless II for distribution to schools, shelters, and regions in accordance with the final requirements. The funds will be allocated based on the needs of homeless students to address their needs. The PRDE will serve all students identified and not based on a formula that require a minimum number of students, nor the creation of consortia. PRDE is a unitary system that serves students with the assistance of the regional personnel of the program, but its only one State Educational Agency (SEA) and one Local Educational Agency (LEA).

For **both ARP Homeless I and ARP Homeless II:**

1. 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;

In the case of PRDE, we are a unitary system, with the responsibilities of one LEA and one SEA. Furthermore, the Office of Federal Affairs is in charge of the management of both grants, ARP – HCY and ARP – ESSER, authorized to provide the Agency with additional tools and resources to work with the prevention, preparedness and response of COVID-19.

However, the programs are managed by two different coordinators and their respective teams, which have met to discuss the activities under each of the grants and have compared them. This exercise ensured that the services that are provided funded with both grants are supplemental to each other and aren't duplicating nor replacing funds respectively, as result of the parallel implementation of these programs. Particularly, the ARP Homeless I and II, will focus on the activities described in this plan and any other needs tied to how the COVID-19 affect the homeless children and youth.

2. 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 wraparound services; and

PRDE will separate around 20% of the portion of funds from the SEA level of ARP Homeless I and ARP Homeless II, for this initiative. Part of the funds will be used to perform an open call through the PRDE webpage (in kind) and utilizing newspapers and other communication means Island-wide, such as press, (to pay for announcements with the ARP Homeless I and II program funds), to extend invitations to community-based organizations that are well-positioned to identify children and youth experiencing homelessness in historically underserved populations in Puerto Rico.

Additionally, the program will reach out to community-based organizations with the assistance of the coordinators and other administrative staff that are planned to be hired, the regional social workers and other regional staff that work for the program.

The purpose of the open calls and reach out activities is for this kind of organizations to be able to submit proposals with information about the type of services they provide to homeless children and youth, the experience they have had offering them, the capacity to add more

participants to continue serving more, area or municipality where they offer services and means the employ to identify additional homeless children and youth, among other information.

Once we have the information and the capacity of the entities, PRDE will evaluate them, to assign funds based on the needs of the students they have the ability to attend under contracts, in compliance with all applicable PRDE procurement and contracting rules and regulations. The funds that will be obligated through the contracts will be from the 20% of the SEA portion of both of these emergency grants, for educationally-related support and wraparound services, as consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic and how it has affected this population. Plus, PRDE will ask the entities to aid PRDE to identify additional children and youth experiencing homelessness on an on-going basis, specially underserved populations, to serve them right away.


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

As mentioned before, PRDE is a unitary system, with the responsibilities of the LEA and the SEA. The Agency has educational regions, but not LEAs (we are only one LEA). Accordingly, the funds are managed by the central program; and assigned to the educational regions based on the children homeless and youth that are identified and the needs that are assessed from this population.

PRDE Homeless program ascribed to the Office of Federal Affairs will assure that additional funds of the LEA portion of both programs will be allocated to the contracts with community-based organizations that can help identify and support historically underserved populations experiencing homelessness (as needed). Based on the capacity of the entities and the municipalities where they offer services, and other mentioned criteria, PRDE will award the contracts for wrap-around services in light of the challenges of COVID-19; to assist eligible participants to attend school and participate fully in school activities, and for any other allowable activity for the Homeless program- LEA portion.

At the present, at least services for the 2,610 are projected, but on an on-going basis we will continue to adjust or assign more funds, to make sure this subgroup is well served, with special attention where there are high concentrations of homeless children and youth, and where the underserved populations are located.

PRDE will be able to provide additional information over this, once we complete the open calls and other dissemination/outreach activities.

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| Chief State School Officer or Authorized Representative (Typed Name):<br>Richard W. Cruz-Franqui, Esq. |                |
| Signature:          | Date: 9/7/2021 |