

**I. For ARP Homeless I:**

1. *How the State Education Agencies (SEA) has used or will use up to 25 percent of funds awarded under the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Homeless I for State-level activities to provide training, technical assistance, capacity building and engagement at the State and Local Education Agencies (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 in the spring of 2021 and how it will support LEAs for the school year 2021-2022. This should include the extent to which the SEA has or plans to build capacity in LEAs that have not yet received an Education of Homeless Children and Youth ( EHCY) subgrant in the past, in order to ensure that these LEAs are well-prepared to utilize the funds provided in ARP Homeless II;*

Recognizing the complexity of making sustainable investments, the CSDE has created a process to provide both support and inspiration to LEAs to aid them in planning for and meeting all students' needs using ARP ESSER funds, including ARP Homeless funds. Activities include:

- 1) [CSDE Guidance](#): Extensive guidance documents identify the priorities that LEAs are encouraged to utilize when planning the use of all funding authorized in the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). Additionally, specific guidance: [COVID-19 and Homelessness: Information for Schools](#), in support of homeless children and youth, has been continuously updated and reissued to LEAs throughout the pandemic, most recently July 2021, with the most current ARP information. This Q&A provides LEAs with evidence-based initiatives/resources for LEAs planning and provision of wrap-around services for spring and summer 2021, and the 2021-22 school year.
- 2) [Spark Innovation Webinars](#): Throughout the ARP ESSER application period, the CSDE has deployed webinars to LEAs that highlight best practices across the state and nation to spark innovation for districts as they determine how to best meet all students' needs. Webinars include training, technical assistance, capacity building, and networking support. To date, topic areas have included: Creating the Road to Success for Students in the Classroom; Expanding & Amplifying Equity through ESSER II and ARP ESSER; Focusing on Attendance & Engagement in the New Normal; Engaging Families to Support Student Learning; Preparing & Supporting our Educator Workforce; Prioritizing Social, Emotional and Mental Health of our Students; Serving the unique needs of high-school students; Building Safe & Healthy Schools. Ongoing webinars to LEAs will build upon the success of this platform to highlight additional best practices to meet the needs of students experiencing homelessness.
- 3) Comprehensive Application: The CSDE has designed the ARP ESSER application to not only guide, but to ensure LEAs are accountable in their efforts to expand

existing initiatives both in depth and breadth. The application includes a set-aside budget and narrative sections specifically for ARP Homeless II funding. Placement for stakeholder engagement representing the interests of children experiencing homelessness is included, as well as for the priority alignment of any activity authorized under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act.

- 4) Staff Support: CSDE is committed to leveraging funds awarded under ARP Homeless I to support further investment in State-level human resources dedicated toward capacity building and engagement to manage work with LEAs and other partners that effectively support students experiencing homelessness. Options available include extending the full-time equivalency of the McKinney-Vento State Coordinator and re-positioning or hiring new staff in direct support of McKinney-Vento related duties.

To build capacity among LEAs that have not received EHCY subgrant in the past, the SEA is examining homeless data among all LEAs throughout the State to identify where to target efforts to encourage LEAs to consider applying for the competitive EHCY grant. LEA data analysis includes examining each LEAs:

- Comparison data between the number of identified HCY to the number of students reported for the free school meals program;
- Comparison data between the number of identified HCY to the number of enrolled students overall; and
- Multi-year -0- reported HCY data.

Connecticut LEAs are ranked by their level of risk to identify LEAs for targeted assistance to improving the identification of HCY, guiding these LEAs through a needs assessment process, and then offering an alignment between their needs and the competitive EHCY process to assist.

The activities described in this section to provide training, technical assistance, capacity building and engagement at the State and local levels, including support to LEAs to increase access to summer programming in 2021, did not encumber state-level ARP Homeless I funds toward immediate needs in spring/summer 2021. Moving forward, state-level ARP Homeless I funds will be targeted toward additional staff support and other work described in this plan to enhance the State's capacity to effectively manage the work described in this plan to effectively support students experiencing homelessness.

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.*

To ensure that every ARP ESSER dollar spent has the greatest impact possible, the CSDE is launching a grassroots marketing campaign for summer/early fall 2021. By focusing on the bottom up communication and meeting residents where they are, the

CSDE has worked to amplify the efficacy of all programs funded by ARP ESSER, including increased access to summer programming and wrap-around services. Building upon the grassroots marketing campaign underway, additional emphasis with tailored outreach and marketing provide a means to circulate and share relevant information to help improve the lives and futures of students experiencing homelessness. These efforts are supported and guided with input through collaboration with State and local agencies and other community-based organizations that include: Connecticut Balance of State Continuum of Care; Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness, Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence; Corporation for Supportive Housing; Partnership for Strong Communities; Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services; Connecticut Department of Housing; Connecticut Department of Corrections; and Connecticut Department of Children and Families.

CSDE has leveraged additional initiatives to make sure the information is reaching families by providing information through the school and summer meals programs, and through a home visitation program called [Learner Engagement and Attendance Program \(LEAP\)](#). This \$10.7 million program is designed to support students who struggled with chronic absenteeism and disengagement from remote learning during the 2020-21 school year, of which Connecticut's students experiencing homelessness were found to be among the hardest hit from the pandemic. Data from 2020-21 has shown that students experiencing homelessness had significantly lower attendance rates than their stably housed peers. LEAP funding has been deployed across fifteen (15) priority districts to contract support personnel that will go directly to homes, engage with families and students, understand the challenges facing them (e.g., housing instability, behavioral health needs, technology, etc.) and help return them to a more regular form of school engagement and attendance, and assist with placement in summer enrichment and learning programs.

The activities described in this section to increase access to summer programming for homeless students and to plan for and provide wraparound services for summer 2021, did not encumber state-level ARP Homeless I funds. Ongoing work aligned with this plan will utilize ARP HCY I funds intended to increase wraparound services during the school year and expand access to summer programming in the future.

- 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 sub-grants, 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.*

In an effort to disburse federal funds quickly to meet the immediate needs of students experiencing homelessness, a portion of ARP Homeless I funding was made available to supplement existing Connecticut EHCY FY21 subgrants beginning June 1, 2021. This funding, titled ARP Bridge funding, was intended to connect students experiencing homelessness and their families to summer learning and enrichment programs this summer (2021) and to engage students and their families in preparation for this fall (2021). LEAs have been directed to use ARP Bridge funding for any of the sixteen uses currently permitted by the [McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act \(42 U.S.C. 11433\(d\)\)](#). Funds may also be used for any expenses necessary to facilitate the identification, enrollment, retention, and educational success of homeless children and youth.

The remaining use of ARP Homeless I funds, roughly \$1.1 million, will be awarded to LEAs competitively on the basis of need and quality of proposals and plans for the use of funds (Section 723(c)(1)). Through a request for proposals (RFP) process to all Connecticut LEAs, applications will address the needs of homeless children and youth, the ability of the LEA to meet such needs, and the extent to which the proposed use of funds strategically leverage both ARP ESSER funds and dedicated homelessness funding to locate, engage, maintain connection, and support students experiencing housing instability and homelessness. The RFP will include a menu of best practices and strategic initiatives for applicants to identify to ensure effective implementation to achieve outcomes. CSDE anticipates funding successful applicants for a three-year period: October 1, 2021 through September 30, 2024 – subject to annual monitoring of benchmarks achieved.

Development of the RFP was informed by data collected in EdSight, the CSDE's education data warehouse. The data shows that Connecticut's students experiencing homelessness were among the hardest hit from the pandemic. Students experiencing homelessness were more than twice as likely to be participating in fully-remote learning compared to the state average (22.6% compared to 10.2%), which lead to a significantly lower attendance rate than if they were in-person learning (78.5% versus 87.0%). These data, alongside data collected annually aligned with the legislative requirements under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act [42 U.S.C. §§ 11434(d), 11434(f), 11434(h)(1)], are being utilized to propel the investment of federal ARP funds at the local level, including in LEAs that have not received McKinney-Vento funding as EHCY subgrantees. The CSDE intends to both increase the funding amounts of individual awards to LEAs and the total number of funded LEAs as an overall expansion of services and supports available to urgently reach students experiencing homelessness. Leveraging data, combining dedicated funding sources (ARP Homeless I with EHCY), and enlisting targeted technical assistance to LEAs are all strategies that CSDE will enlist to ensure that supports from ARP Homeless I urgently reach more students that need them.

## 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; and*

Through a grassroots marketing campaign and ongoing stakeholder engagement and feedback, the CSDE will continue multi-level communication to identify the needs of families experiencing homelessness in order to provide effective supports. In partnership with the McKinney-Vento State Coordinator, state-level activities will provide LEAs with the following supports:

- a) **Capacity-Building:** With significant new funding to support children and youth experiencing homelessness, schools and districts have an opportunity to build more robust McKinney-Vento programs and to ensure funds are used to best serve them. LEAs will be provided with guides and technical assistance for conducting needs assessments, strategic program planning, policy and procedure development, and specific best practices for student success. Based on existing Connecticut statutes, remote learning is not an option for students this coming school year. LEAs will be guided to consider each student's individual circumstances as a means to support unaccompanied youth with learning options, expanded and enhanced throughout the pandemic, as strategies for credit accrual and recovery.
- b) **Training and Professional Development:** CSDE will continue with the robust webinar series to provide professional learning with school district McKinney-Vento liaisons and community organizations and partners. Planned topics include: McKinney-Vento Act requirements and implementation; best practices and networking; strategies for the provision of transportation; and, identifying and supporting unaccompanied youth.
- c) **Agency-wide Collaboration:** CSDE continues to ensure internal coordination of initiatives to support students experiencing homelessness including:
  - a. Bi-weekly [Talk Tuesday Webinars](#): roundtable discussions with LEA attendance leads to ensure the implementation of specific actions to support regular attendance and engagement of students experiencing homelessness;
  - b. Monthly Friday CAFÉ's: working sessions with school leaders and family liaisons working in and with school districts;
  - c. Monthly Thursday After Hours: evening roundtables on family and community engagement with classroom teachers and support staff
- d) **Engagement:** Community, state and national partners will continue to inform and guide decisions toward achieving lasting, state, and local level policy and program

changes to improve the lives and futures of students experiencing homelessness. CSDE has committed to bringing together stakeholders on specific wrap-around issues ranging from early childhood program participation, strategies for housing solutions, and successful transitions to career and post-secondary education.

The activities described in this section to provide training, technical assistance, capacity-building, and engagement at the State and LEA levels will encumber state-level ARP Homeless II funds. ARP HCY II funds will provide for additional staff support and contracted services with other state and local partners for these new activities that support LEAs in providing wrap-around services for school year 2021-2022.

- 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.*

Through the use of its electronic grant management system (EGMS), the CSDE designed a comprehensive ARP ESSER application that guides LEAs to reflect upon ongoing needs and to consider how ARP ESSER funds might help expand the depth and breadth of existing initiatives to reach our goal of reimagining schools to transform students' lives. This ARP ESSER application includes a requirement for stakeholder engagement representing the interests of children experiencing homelessness and priority alignment for any activity authorized under the McKinney-Vento Act (42 U.S.C. 11433). It also contains both a set-aside budget and narrative sections specifically for the ARP Homeless II formula funding calculated and distributed in accordance with the required USDE formula issued July 6, 2021. This comprehensive application is intended to ensure that LEAs are accountable in their efforts to address a coordinated response of behalf of the needs of students experiencing homelessness.

For those LEAs that are not able to meet the required minimum formula amount, the CSDE will work with them to design a manageable process to access available ARP Homeless II funding and also in selecting an appropriate lead applicant for the creation of a funding consortium. For any LEAs that choose to decline access and use of funds available through ARP Homeless II, their portion of the formula funding will be re-allocated back to other eligible LEAs within the existing grant budget term, maintaining the 75% minimum distribution.

### **III. 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.*

The ARP ESSER application in EGMS includes a set-aside ARP Homeless II narrative section and budget. The ARP Homeless II section includes: Background to ARP Homeless Children and Youth (HCY) II funding; a description of how ARP Homeless II funds will be used to supplement and not replace supports and services being provided with ARP ESSER funds; and alignment targeted to the CSDE Priority Goal(s) with ARP Homeless funds.

An assigned cohort of CSDE staff, including the McKinney-Vento State Coordinator, provide consultation and program implementation for all ARP and ESSER related funds awarded to LEAs. After the application is LEA Superintendent approved and submitted, it is reviewed, at minimum, by two ARP ESSER team members. Team members review each application and may provide comments and concerns to the LEA that may require edits or additional explanation. Therefore, CSDE staff will be in a position to monitor the application of funds. The application may be moved to an approved status only when related concerns or required modifications are addressed.

The combined ARP-ESSER and ARP-Homeless II application serves as a monitoring and accountability tool, with application and budget approval, monitoring drawdowns, and tracking expenditures. Specific to ARP-Homeless II funding, CSDE staff will continue to provide technical assistance and to support decision-making and effective use of related funding to address the needs of students experiencing homelessness.

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, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer plus) (LGBTQ+) youth, and pregnant, parenting, or caregiving students experiencing homelessness, and connect them to educationally-related support and wraparound services; and*

The CSDE is currently networking and in discussion with variety of community-based and housing/homeless advocacy organizations (Center for Children's Advocacy; Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness, Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence; Center for Children's Advocacy; Corporation for Supportive Housing; Partnership for Strong Communities; Opening Doors Fairfield County) to outline and vet awards and contracts to support the agency's work that connects and serves children and youth experiencing homelessness with educationally related support and wraparound services. Available options include awarding subgrants through an RFP

process or utilizing the direct contracting process for state agencies allowable under the Connecticut General Statutes.

Three statewide priorities for ARP HCY State-level funds are currently focused upon:

- Outreach and Awareness. Building upon CSDE's grassroots marketing campaign to create tailored efforts using ARP HCY funds focused upon improving the lives and futures of students experiencing homelessness. Producing and sharing information across units at all levels (neighborhoods, towns/cities, and state) and increasing all LEAs ability to reach and connect with underserved and socially disadvantaged students.
- Inter-agency Collaboration. Utilizing joint efforts, resources, and decision making to produce interdependent system projects that focus upon improving services to youth and families experiencing homelessness. Existing working relationships between CSDE and Connecticut Department of Housing; Connecticut Department of Corrections; Connecticut Department of Children and Families; and Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services are the foundations to create opportunity with ARP HCY funding to pilot and support innovative solutions that prior lack of funding and differing mandates may have constrained.
- Youth Supports and Service. Current data supports that Connecticut unaccompanied homeless youth (UHY) are predominately students of color, self-identify as LGBTQ+, and are English learners. CSDE is committed to leverage support with ARP HCY funding to engage and connect underserved youth with academic supports to ensure success in learning, grade advancement high school completion and college and career readiness.

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

In the past, CSDE has recognized and supported LEA efforts that engaged local community-based partnerships, with and without the use of contracts, to help identify and support underserved populations experiencing homelessness. Examples have included the sub-contracting of McKinney-Vento funds in New London Public Schools with a local domestic violence shelter and New Haven PS with a regional housing and homeless service provider. Both produced improved outcomes related to identification of homeless students. CSDE is committed to building upon these types of efforts that highlight effective partnerships and stimulate similar ones in other LEAs.

The current CSDE ARP Homeless II funding application prompts LEAs to examine local needs through meaningful engagement with stakeholders representing the interests of children experiencing homelessness, children and youth in foster care, migratory students, children who are incarcerated, and other underserved students. The CSDE

staff will continue to provide technical assistance and to support decision-making and effective use of related funding to community-based organizations via webinars and direct communication with LEAs.

The Connecticut McKinney-Vento Competitive application, past and present, highlights and encourages collaboration with external partners as means of leveraging and linking existing supports in the community to assist with a proposed program. The collaboration narrative in the application specifically calls for LEA applicants to describe community partnerships, agencies and programs (e.g., shelters, youth programs, social services, business partners, faith-based agencies, housing support agencies, Head Start, HUD Continuum of Care, etc.) that enhance the effectiveness of the proposed program and support the needs identified in the application. To emphasize the contributions that community-based organizations make in this shared work, the new Connecticut McKinney-Vento Competitive application (2021-24) and scoring rubric was revised to leverage consideration for proposals that utilize these collaborative local partnerships. Funding awarded through the Connecticut McKinney-Vento Competitive application incorporates the annual McKinney Vento state appropriation with ARP Homeless I funding to LEAs.

Additionally, ongoing CSDE partnerships and work group efforts that include the Connecticut Balance of State Continuum of Care, Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness and Partnership for Strong Communities, have included regular ARP and ESSER funding updates. This collaboration supports a shared message among partners that strongly encourage local community-based organizations to engage as stakeholders with LEAs in the development of resources and supports to identify and support historically underserved populations experiencing homelessness in the communities they serve.