Help Protect Coronavirus Funds from Fraud and Abuse

U.S. Department of Education ✯ Office of Inspector General

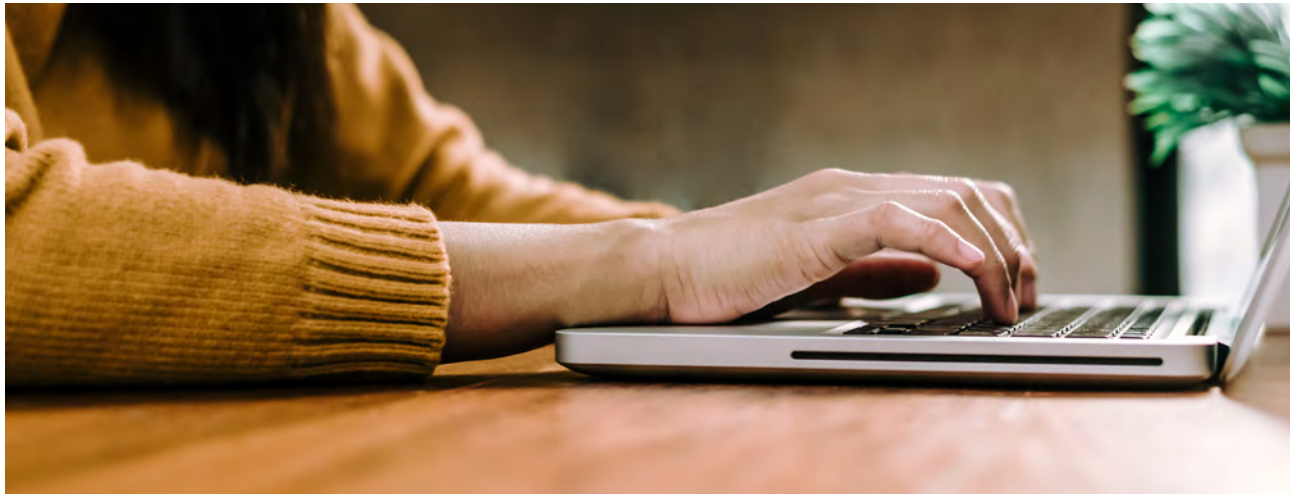
Let's Work Together to Protect Coronavirus Response Funds from Fraud and Abuse

Three measures have been signed into law providing the U.S. Department of Education (ED) with more than $280 billion to assist States, K–12 schools, school districts, and institutions of higher education in meeting their needs and the needs of their students impacted by the coronavirus pandemic—the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act or CARES Act (March 2020); the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021-Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (December 2020); and the American Rescue Plan (March 2021).

The Office of Inspector General (OIG), as the independent oversight arm of the U.S. Department of Education, helps ensure these vital funds are used as required and reach the intended recipients. This includes investigating misuse, theft, and other criminal activity involving coronavirus response funding. This is no small task: criminals and bad actors are targeting coronavirus response funds, seizing on every opportunity they can in this time of crisis to steal or intentionally misuse this money, including preying on students; schools; and Federal, State, and local government agencies. That's why oversight and accountability of these funds is so critical. That's why investigations into potential fraud or other criminal activity are so important. And that's what the OIG Special Investigations Unit (SIU) is all about.

The OIG Special Investigations Unit is Here to Help

The OIG SIU is working to identify, prevent, and stop those who seek to steal coronavirus response funding. This team is composed of professional criminal investigators with decades of experience in conducting education-related investigations and stopping education-focused fraud schemes involving Federal K–12 and higher education programs. Many of those investigations started with a call to the OIG by a person who suspected fraud. That is how we were able to stop it. That is why we cannot do this alone. And that is why we need your help.



So What Does Education Coronavirus Response Fraud Look Like?

It can take many shapes, like missing school funds or property, irregularities in contracts or undue influence by people in decision-making positions, identity theft and fraudsters posing as students to steal student aid, or scammers targeting student loan borrowers offering to provide services related to coronavirus student loan relief for a fee.

These are just a few examples, and sadly, there are more. But you are on the front lines, and you can be our eyes and ears for what's happening with coronavirus response funds. Maybe you work for a State or territorial Governor's office or educational agency distributing education-related coronavirus response funds. Maybe you're an employee of a school district, school, or institution of higher education spending those funds. Or you could be with a law enforcement agency that's receiving calls from your community with reports of potential fraud. No matter where you are, if you come across something suspicious, something that could be fraud, we need you to report it to the OIG SIU. Working together is the best way to stop those who seek to enrich themselves with coronavirus response funds. Together, we can help ensure that this funding is used as intended: helping our nation's schools and students impacted by the coronavirus pandemic.

Coronavirus Response Funding Snapshot

Funded through the CARES Act, the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, and the American Rescue Plan

$4.26 billion

Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund

Awarded To: Governor's offices to provide to local educational agencies (LEAs), institutions of higher education (IHEs), or other education-related entities the Governor deems essential.

Purpose: Support efforts to provide educational services to students and to support ongoing operations. Learn more.

$190 billion

Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund

Awarded To: State educational agencies to provide to LEAs and charter schools that are LEAs

Purpose: A wide range of activities, including purchasing and using technology for online learning, coordinating efforts with public health departments, addressing the needs of disadvantaged student populations, planning for school closures, purchasing cleaning supplies, providing mental health services, and implementing summer learning and supplemental after-school programs. Learn more.

$76.2 billion

Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund

Awarded To: IHEs

Purpose: Assist students affected by the coronavirus pandemic with expenses such as food, housing, technology, healthcare, childcare, and course materials; help Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Minority Serving Institutions to cover expenses related to closures and transitions to distance education, and help institutions of higher education cover lost revenue, technology, or other expenses related to the cost of attendance. Learn more.

$5.5 billion

Emergency Assistance to Nonpublic Schools

Awarded To: Awarded to Governor's offices ($2.75 million from Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund)

Purpose: Provide services or assistance to nonpublic schools that enroll a significant percentage of low-income students and are most impacted by the pandemic. Learn more.

Free Resources to Help You Identify and Report Coronavirus Response Fraud

Do you need to know more about how to identify education-related coronavirus response fraud and how to report it? The OIG SIU has lots of free resources available to help you identify, stop, and report scams.

- **Virtual trainings.** Get an overview of education-related coronavirus response fraud and how to spot it and report it.
- **One-on-one meetings.** Meet with us to discuss any specific concerns you may have about coronavirus response fraud.
- **Fraud indicator materials.** Download brochures and posters with helpful tips on identifying and reporting allegations of fraud, abuse, or other criminal activity involving coronavirus response funds.

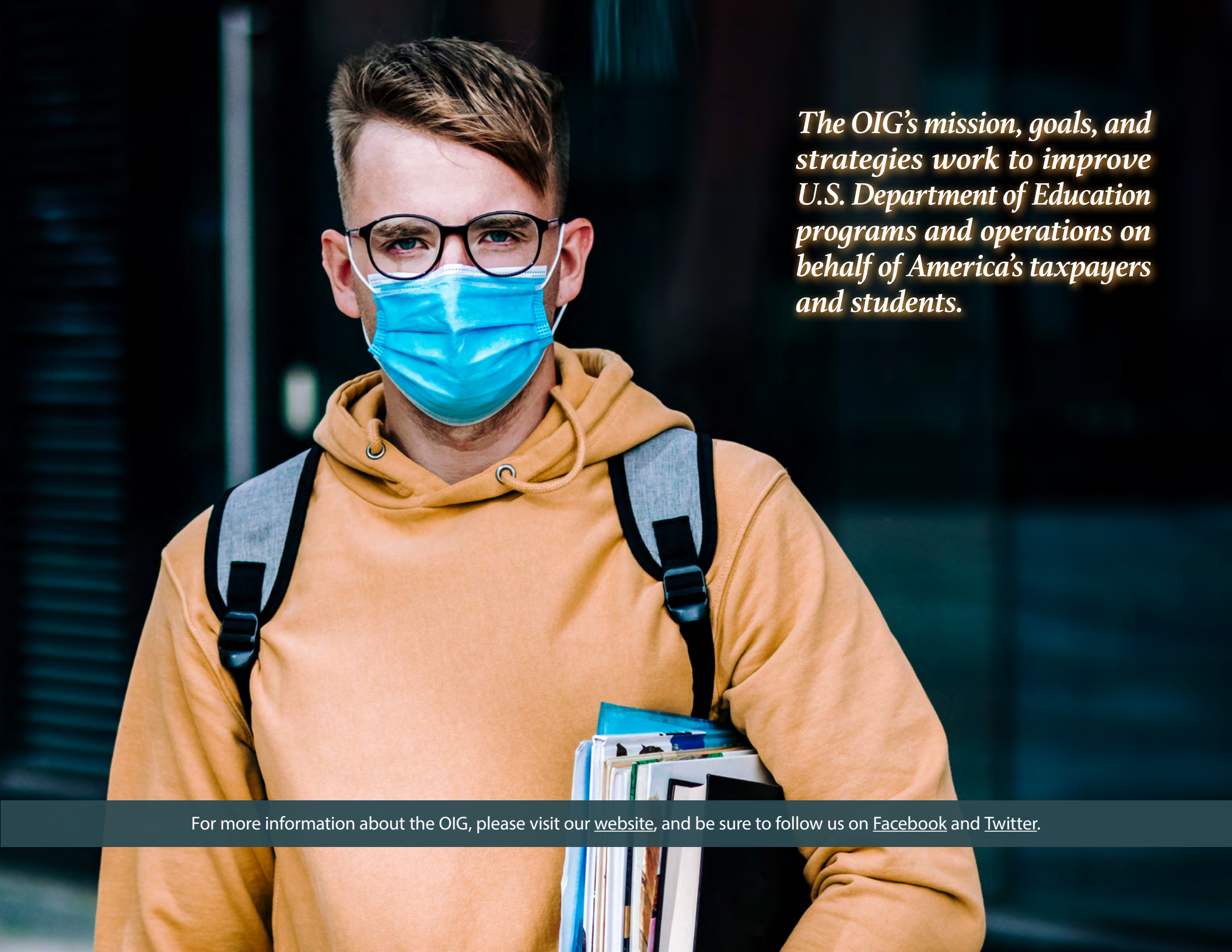
Contact the OIG Special Investigations Unit

To schedule a training, set up a call, or learn more about the vital role you play in identifying, preventing, and stopping education-related coronavirus response fraud, please contact the OIG SIU today.

OIG Special Investigations Unit
SIU@ed.gov
1-800-MISUSED (1-800-647-8733)
OIG Coronavirus News & Resources Webpage

To report allegations of fraud or other criminal activity, contact our Hotline, available 24-7.

Click Here to
Contact Our Hotline



The OIG's mission, goals, and strategies work to improve U.S. Department of Education programs and operations on behalf of America's taxpayers and students.

For more information about the OIG, please visit our website, and be sure to follow us on Facebook and Twitter.