



ARP-HCY State Set-Aside Checklist

The American Rescue Plan Act provided \$800 million in funding specifically dedicated to support the identification, enrollment, and school participation of children and youth experiencing homelessness, including through wrap-around services. These funds, known as American Rescue Plan-Homeless Children and Youth Funds (ARP-HCY), were released in two phases.

SchoolHouse Connection (SHC) recognizes the important role that McKinney-Vento State Coordinators and state educational agencies (SEAs) have in using and dispersing ARP-HCY funds. State Coordinators are the key to providing comprehensive technical assistance and professional development for local educational agencies (LEAs), consortia, and community-based organizations (CBOs). We also realize that there are many challenges in navigating state-level procedures, and that the directive to get funds out as expeditiously as possible – while also ensuring that funds are used as effectively as possible – has been difficult to carry out.

States may reserve up to 25 percent of both the Part I and Part II allocations for state-level activities. State set-aside funds may be used for training, technical assistance, capacity-building and engagement. The U.S. Department of Education specifically names underserved populations and encourages states to contract with community-based organizations already serving these populations to provide wrap-around services. Many states are choosing not to keep the full 25 percent, in order to release more funds to LEAs. State Coordinators should consider what amount is necessary to accomplish state-level activities as named in state plans. More information on state-level activities is available in the U.S. Department of Education's [Dear Colleague Letter](#).

The purpose of this checklist is to help guide state decisions in allocating and using state set-aside ARP-HCY funds to best meet the needs of children and youth experiencing homelessness.

Considerations in determining the best use of state set-aside funds:

- How will the SEA gather feedback from the following stakeholders?
 - LEAs
 - Youth
 - Families
 - Homeless liaisons
 - Subgrantees and non-subgrantees
 - Community-based organizations who provide services to homeless children and youth
- Has the state conducted a needs assessment? Consider the following in a needs assessment:
 - The FTE of the State Coordinator and other EHCY program staff
 - Accessing and analyzing data, such as:
 - Numbers of identified students
 - Numbers of students receiving free and reduced lunch
 - Graduation rates
 - Math and literacy assessments
 - Attendance and truancy rates
 - Review gaps in data between McKinney-Vento students, economically disadvantaged students, and non-economically disadvantaged students
 - Topics and frequency of trainings provided to local homeless liaisons
 - Stakeholder feedback on needed resources
- What are the data points that need to be addressed?
 - What advocacy groups can be partners in meeting the needs demonstrated in the data?
- What conversations need to happen between state fiscal staff and EHCY staff?
- Who are the service providers already working with children and youth experiencing homelessness? What partnerships or programs already exist?
 - In Alabama, the SEA is partnering with 211 Connects Alabama (United Way) to provide regional specialists who will walk families through accessing services.
 - In Louisiana, the SEA is partnering with Louisiana Public Broadcasting for media and website development on family engagement in order to support families in engaging with their children's education no matter what their living situation.
 - In Arkansas, the SEA is partnering with two community organizations (Bright Futures and Every Arkansan in order to develop a rapid response structure to bring resources to families.
- How can the funds be used to expand the capacity of existing service providers?
- How can funds be used to increase state-level capacity?
 - Fiscal or grant staff
 - Technical assistance
 - Contracts with national organizations

Navigating state procurement processes:

- Can the SEA leverage the sole-source vendor process?
- Who are important SEA level staff that can assist with navigating the procurement process?
- Are there inter- or intra- governmental agreements that can be leveraged?
- What are the key timelines for the SEA procurement process?
- Given the short turnaround time for using the funds, what fiscal options may exist?

Contracts with community-based organizations (CBOs):

- Are there regional educational agencies that can serve as flow-through entities in contracts with CBOs?
- What memoranda of understanding or agreement already exist with CBOs?
- What clear and specific parameters exist or can be developed to ensure that CBOs understand McKinney-Vento?
- What additional training needs to happen for CBOs to understand McKinney-Vento?
- What CBOs exist that are already providing services to underserved populations?
 - In Maine, set-aside funds are distributed through contracts with CBOs to organizations already working with populations such as LGBTQIA+ and immigrant families. These CBOs will support awareness building and provide training. The SEA was able to use their sole-source vendor process to put these contracts in place.

Other SEA-level considerations:

- Are the roles and responsibilities clearly defined?
 - Homeless liaison's role
 - State Coordinator (or SEA) role
 - The role of the CBO in providing services
- Can set-aside funds be distributed in a grant or mini-grant process instead of through a procurement process?
 - In Tennessee, LEAs can apply for mini-grants, funded through the state set-aside, to fund a full-time systems navigator position.
 - In Washington D.C., an application through an RFP is open to community-based organizations to provide trainings and wraparound services.
- What job descriptions already exist that can be modified?
- Does that state have a Youth Homelessness Demonstration Project (YHDP) with a Youth Advisory Board (YAB) that could be a partner?
- Does the SEA have a parent advisory board that could reach out to parents experiencing homelessness to provide feedback?
- How can the state's family engagement team be involved in gathering stakeholder feedback?