Many communities lack emergency shelter for families and/or for youth. Where shelters do exist, they are often full, unable to serve families as a unit, or do not accept youth who are minors who are homeless on their own (unaccompanied youth). When families and youth are not able to access shelter, they stay in cars, campgrounds, or temporarily with other people in situations that are unstable, often unsafe, and put them at risk of trafficking. These unstable situations not only threaten the well-being of children and youth, they create barriers to regular school attendance and participation.

The U.S. Department of Education (ED) specifically allows ARP-HCY funds to be used for paying for short-term, temporary housing (including a hotel or motel) on a case-by-case basis. According to ED, while the timeframe for short-term housing is fact-specific and based on individual circumstances, housing transitions can be complex and take time. Local educational agencies should consider whether the cost is reasonable and necessary for the student to attend school (including in their school of origin), with the understanding that ARP-HCY funds should be used as a last resort when other funding sources are not available through collaboration and coordination with local housing providers, local government agencies, or nonprofits that support families and youth experiencing homelessness.

Using ARP-HCY funds to pay for short-term housing in motels stabilizes students while longer-term housing arrangements are sought, thus helping students to attend and participate fully in school. In addition, when ARP-HCY funds are used to pay for a family or youth to stay in a motel room, that family or youth meets the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) definition of homelessness. This can open up housing options for families and youth who meet the U.S. Department of Education's definition of homelessness, but do not qualify under HUD’s definition.

💡 Local Spotlights: Using ARP-HCY for Emergency Motel Stays

Temporary, Emergency Housing: Clifton Public Schools, New Jersey

Clifton Public Schools allocated funds to meet areas of need. One such area is short-term, temporary hotel stays. CPS partnered with a community hotel to provide a few nights of stay for families (averaging about $1,000 per stay). Catholic Charities then extends the stay and links the family to other housing resources. The hotel contracts directly with families, so there are no liability concerns for the district, and store card items can be delivered directly to families at the hotel.
Motel 6 Partnership: Monterey Peninsula Unified School District, California

Monterey Peninsula Unified School District (MPUSD) developed a partnership with Motel 6 for families needing access to emergency housing. Homeless education staff worked with their district business office to track the funding. The school district receives monthly invoices directly from Motel 6, which it then pays with ARP-HCY Part II funds. MPUSD created a streamlined referral process to determine which families are eligible for the short-term emergency housing, and rooms are booked through the office of the Assistant Superintendent of Multi-Tiered Systems of Support. The name of the district support staff working with the family is also entered into the booking system, so that Motel 6 has the direct contact information in case of any issues. Upon checking into the Motel 6, families sign a waiver accepting any liability. MPUSD and Motel 6 specifically included in their MOU that the school district is not liable for any damages incurred. See: Monterey Peninsula Unified Rate Agreement with Motel 6, Monterey Peninsula Unified Preferred Discount Agreement with Motel 6.

Leveraging Motel Partnerships in Rural Communities: Lafourche Parish, Louisiana

Lafourche Parish School District (LPSD) is a rural school district that decided to use their ARP-HCY funds to provide students experiencing homelessness and their families with short-term hotel stays for 3-5 days. To develop partnerships with hotels, the district’s Community Outreach Director wrote a letter outlining the definition of homelessness under McKinney-Vento, program information, and addressing the unique needs of families experiencing homelessness in LPSD. The district then worked with social work staff to develop clear guidelines around the case management that would be provided during their short-term stay at the hotel, including meals and transportation. When families arrive at the hotel, case managers walk families to their rooms as a way to provide the initial check-in and assess the support the family may need during their stay. With the success of the initial partnership, the district was then able to expand to work with three additional hotel sites in the community. The approval process for the purchase order initially was lengthy and made it difficult to meet the immediate needs of families. However, with the support of the District Federal Programs Director and district leadership, the transition was made to a district purchasing card. This allowed payment to be initiated at the time of the confirmation receipt from the hotel. After the 3-5 day stay, some families also might transition to the Parish Council who is able to fund additional days in the hotel. According to the McKinney-Vento liaison, the hotel partnerships provide families a little extra time to figure out their next steps. ARP-HCY funds allowed the district to begin this program, and they hope to continue it through community partnerships after the funds are no longer available.

Community Partnership with Marriott: Cincinnati Public Schools, Ohio

Cincinnati Public Schools (CPS) is using ARP-HCY funds to provide short-term emergency housing (1-3 days). CPS is contracting with a community-based organization called UpSpring, since UpSpring already held a contract with Marriott for discounted hotel room stays. In collaboration with district and UpSpring legal counsels, a contract was put in place with a
specific process and an open purchase order for providing CPS families with short-term emergency housing. In addition to paying for the short-term hotel stays, the district uses ARP-HCY funds to pay the salary of a Systems Housing Navigator. When families experiencing homelessness meet with the Navigator, she determines the number of motel days that are approved, and sends a referral to UpSpring and to the director of the community’s largest shelter (if the family has no other housing arrangement). Once the family is in shelter, the Navigator follows up to see if the family will be housed through the shelter's rapid rehousing program, or if they are interested in a CMHA (housing authority) housing voucher. If they are interested in a housing voucher, the Navigator sends a referral. This process allows families to be housed by the time the 30 days in shelter is up.

**Hotels.Com Cards and Hotel Vouchers in California**

Some school districts in California are providing short-term, emergency housing in several ways: One district has a partnership with hotels.com to provide a hotels.com card, using the rate listed on the website, for families to make their own reservation. This removes the liability concern from the district and places it on the parent, with the district paying hotels.com directly. San Diego Unified School District partners with Project Rest to provide hotel vouchers. Another California school district works with local outreach programs through Catholic ministries to help facilitate the distribution of temporary housing/motel vouchers.

**Additional Resources**

- Allowable and Strategic uses of American Rescue Plan Homeless Children and Youth Funds (ARP-HCY)
- Progress and Promise: An Early Look at COVID Relief Funds for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness

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REMINDER: ARP-HCY funds may be used for "any expenses necessary to facilitate the identification, enrollment, retention, or educational success of homeless children and youth in order to enable homeless children and youth to attend school and participate fully in school activities." Broad categories included in ED guidance include:

- Providing wrap-around services (which could be provided in collaboration with and/or through contracts with community-based organizations, and could include academic supports, trauma-informed care, social-emotional support, and mental health services);
- Purchasing needed supplies (e.g., personal protective equipment, eyeglasses, school supplies, personal care items);
- Providing transportation to enable children and youth to attend school and participate fully in school activities;
● Purchasing cell phones or other technological devices for unaccompanied, homeless children and youth to enable such children and youth to attend school and fully participate in school activities;
● Providing access to reliable, high-speed internet for students through the purchase of internet-connected devices/equipment, mobile hotspots, wireless service plans, or installation of Community Wi-Fi Hotspots (e.g., at homeless shelters), especially in underserved communities;
● Paying for short-term, temporary housing (e.g., a few days in a motel) when such emergency housing is the only reasonable option for COVID-safe temporary housing and when necessary to enable the homeless children and youth to attend school and participate fully in school activities (including summer school); and
● Providing store cards/prepaid debit cards to purchase materials necessary for students to participate fully in school activities."

In addition, LEAs may use funds for any of the sixteen uses permitted by the McKinney-Vento Act (42 U.S.C. 11433(d)).