

Purchasing a Vehicle with ARP-HCY Funds: Benefits and Considerations

Students experiencing homelessness often stay in precarious, unstable situations over which they have no control. High rates of mobility and lack of reliable transportation contribute to academic challenges and [extremely high chronic absenteeism rates](#). While the [McKinney-Vento Act](#) provides educational protections for students experiencing homelessness, including specific transportation requirements, transportation remains one of the biggest unmet needs for students experiencing homelessness. [American Rescue Plan-Homeless Children and Youth \(ARP-HCY\) funds](#) provide an opportunity to meet transportation needs through more flexible uses of funding, including vehicle purchases. Below are some key considerations for local educational agencies (LEAs) to consider in purchasing a vehicle with ARP-HCY funds.

Key Benefits of Vehicle Purchases



Purchasing a vehicle with ARP-HCY funds is a sustainable way to reduce or eliminate some more costly transportation expenses, such as taxi services.

With on-going bus driver shortages and limited bus routes, many LEAs find themselves relying on taxi services to meet emergency or interim transportation needs until a longer term solution is reached. LEAs that have purchased vehicles have discovered that they were able to lower their transportation costs by decreasing or eliminating the reliance on taxi services or inefficient public transportation to ensure students and families arrive at school on time. In addition, a vehicle can remain operational for more than seven years, providing a lasting solution to a persistent issue.



Purchasing a vehicle with ARP-HCY funds allows for more flexibility to better meet the unique needs of students and families experiencing homelessness.

LEAs that have purchased vehicles with ARP-HCY funds have been able to change pick up and drop off locations for highly mobile students more rapidly than bus companies or taxi service providers. This is important because families and youth who are homeless often have no control over how long they can stay at any given place, and may have to leave their situation abruptly. Consistent transportation that can easily be re-routed helps ensure regular attendance.



Purchasing a vehicle can help meet additional transportation needs that increase family and student stability.

Having a vehicle on site has allowed LEAs to support students and families who need transportation to health or housing appointments, parent-teacher conferences, extra-curricular activities, and other activities that help students arrive at school present and ready to learn. Some LEAs have used their ARP-HCY vehicles for home visits to meet with families about attendance and grades.



Drivers trained in the McKinney-Vento Act are partnering with the homeless liaison to connect students with services and communicate pending moves and other needs.

LEAs that have purchased vehicles with ARP-HCY funds have ensured that anyone who drives the vehicle receives training on safety measures and meeting the needs of students experiencing homelessness. Training topics include proper procedures for dropping off students residing in shelters, motels, campgrounds, or other sensitive locations, and identifying and addressing the needs of students living in potentially hazardous conditions. The driver becomes an additional support for students, families, and the homeless liaison.

Five Key Considerations Purchasing Vehicles with ARP-HCY Funds:

1

Storage:

Where will the vehicle be stored when it is not in use?

Is space accessible to drivers, including those who may need to access the vehicle for emergency situations?

2

Maintenance:

Is there a budget for maintenance?

Who will be responsible for tracking ongoing maintenance needs?

3

Drivers and Dispatching:

Who will drive and who will be responsible for coordinating the dispatch of the vehicle?

LEAs have taken a number of approaches to identifying drivers, such as hiring part-time drivers and/or certifying existing school staff members to drive the vehicle.

4

Insurance and Liability:

Who will be responsible for ensuring that the vehicle is insured? Who will be responsible for ensuring anyone driving the vehicle is properly trained on safety procedures and the needs of students experiencing homelessness?

5

LEA-Level Decision Makers:

Who are the points of contact in the business and transportation office who need to be involved in this initiative? What logistical details need to be discussed before purchasing a vehicle?

Resources

Archived Webinar:


Addressing Transportation Needs Through Vehicle Purchases with ARP-HCY Funds

 [Watch the Recording](#)

 [Download the Powerpoint](#)



Q&A with examples:

 [Meeting the Transportation Needs of Students Experiencing Homelessness](#)

September 2023 guidance on allowable uses of ARP-HCY funds.

 [The U.S. Department of Education's ARP-HCY Updated Guidance Letter](#)