

Seven Ways to Help Homeless Students Return Back to School with ARP-HCY Funds



This fall, [over one million children and youth](#) will start the school year without a home of their own. Whether in rural, suburban, and urban school districts, these students face unique barriers to educational access and success.

If your school district still has remaining American Rescue Plan – Homeless Children and Youth (ARP-HCY) funds, now is the time to finalize plans to ensure that funds are obligated to help students experiencing homelessness by the September 30, 2024 deadline.¹ A list of [all ARP-HCY LEA grantees](#) is available from the U.S. Department of Education (ED).

Below are suggestions for using ARP-HCY funds during this back-to-school season to identify and support students experiencing homelessness.

According to [ED's guidance](#), each allowable use is context-specific to determine whether it is reasonable and necessary. ED also has provided [important clarifications](#) to questions from state and local educational agencies about the use of ARP-HCY funds during and after the liquidation period.

1. IDENTIFICATION AND ENROLLMENT



Families and youth experiencing homelessness may not realize that they can enroll in school, or may need help with enrollment. ARP-HCY funds can be used for posters, brochures, and other awareness materials; translating those materials into other languages, as well as public service announcements and billboards. These funds also may be used for back-to-school/welcome events, and stipends or extended contract hours for bilingual staff to connect with immigrant students experiencing homelessness; staff to connect with families who were identified as homeless in the previous school year; and staff to distribute awareness materials in the community (including shelters, motels, libraries, and other locations).

¹ [State Education Agencies may apply for extended liquidation of ARP-HCY funds](#). If a state education agency applies and is approved for ARP-HCY extended liquidation, local educational agencies (LEAs) would have up to 14 additional months to draw down or liquidate ARP-HCY funds, if those funds were obligated by the September 30, 2024 deadline. Homeless liaisons should direct questions about their state's extended liquidation process to [their state homeless education coordinator](#).

2. TRANSPORTATION TO INCREASE ATTENDANCE



Help students experiencing homelessness start the school year strong by using ARP-HCY funds to remove transportation barriers to enrollment and attendance. ARP-HCY funds can be used to purchase gas cards, bikes, and public transit passes for students; pay for car repairs; purchase vehicles for school district use; provide stipends or extend hours for drivers and/or transportation coordinators; contract with rideshare and other third-party transportation providers; and to defray the cost of drivers' education fees.

3. SUPPLIES AND BASIC NEEDS



Children and youth experiencing homelessness often lack clothing and shoes, or miss school because they lack hygiene items or access to places to shower or do laundry. These students may not have school supplies, or other items necessary for class and extra-curricular activities. ARP-HCY funds can be used to purchase supplies for families and youth directly, including clothing, bedding, hygiene items, laundry detergent/laundry tokens, and eyeglasses. They also can be used for store cards/prepaid debit cards so that students or families can purchase materials themselves, and for washers/dryers located in schools.

4. COMMUNICATION AND TECHNOLOGY



Families and youth who experience homelessness move frequently, abruptly, and often with little advance notice. They may not have a way to communicate with school staff about these moves, and what they need to continue to attend school. ARP-HCY funds can be used to purchase cell phones and prepaid minutes, hot spots, and wireless service plans to increase communication between families, youth, and schools.

5. MENTAL HEALTH



Homelessness is caused by traumatic events, and is itself a traumatic experience, that can lead to isolation, disengagement, and harm. ARP-HCY funds can be used to increase counseling support for homeless students, either directly or by contracting with community-based providers.

6. FOOD



Many children and youth who are homeless don't have access to food, making it difficult to concentrate in class. ARP-HCY funds can be used for weekend backpacks; snacks for back-to-school events, and for before or after school programming; and food or food cards for students participating in traveling sports teams.

7. EMERGENCY MOTEL STAYS



Many communities lack shelters, or their shelters may be full, or shelter policies may separate family members. In these situations, motel stays for a short period of time can increase safety and attendance, and help bridge the gap until longer-term housing arrangements can be made. ARP-HCY funds can be used for short-term motel stays 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.

Related Resources:

- U.S. Department of Education's "[Dear Colleague Letter](#)" to Chief State School Officers updating the allowable uses of funds to meet urgent needs.
- [Maximize Final ARP-HCY Funds: Quick Spending and Cost Guide](#)
- [Reducing Chronic Absence for Students Experiencing Homelessness With ARP-HCY, EHCY, and Title I Part A Funds](#)
- [Sample forms and MOUs](#)