



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) on COVID-19 Federal Funds and Policies

Updated 4/28/20

1. What funds are going directly to health centers?

As provided in Congress' first and third stimulus bill, HRSA announced awards totaling [\\$100 million](#) for health centers on March 24, and [\\$1.3 billion](#) on April 8 to help health centers maintain staffing capacity and respond to the COVID-19 crisis. **4/28 update:** On April 24, Congress passed a bill with [\\$600 million](#) designated for health centers for testing, staffing, and PPE (details about disbursement forthcoming). More information can be found on the National Association of Community Health Center's [COVID-19 landing page](#) along with information on [new federal programs to address cash flow and payroll concerns](#), and other resources and policies relevant to health centers.

2. What other funds are available to the HCH Community?

Many resources going to states and local government agencies are eligible to go to health centers and/or to be used for health care and support services with great flexibility:

- **HUD Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) for people experiencing homelessness:** \$4 billion is provided through the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Of the \$4 billion, \$2 billion will be distributed to communities that received ESG money in Fiscal Year 2020 and the remaining funds will go out within 90 days to communities that the HUD Secretary determines are of the highest need. These funds are to be used for emergency shelters, motel/hotel vouchers, and essential services including health care, with [broad waiver authority](#). The Council advocated for these funds to be used for medical respite care and other health services, and encourages the HCH community to [keep advocating locally](#) to obtain these funds for respite and other services. *Distribution: HUD [announced allocation on April 2nd](#) of the first \$1 billion of the \$4 billion. Further [funding announcements](#) are forthcoming.*
 Note: See a [breakdown of all new HUD funds](#), including HOPWA, CoC, and CDBG.
- **FEMA Disaster Relief Fund:** \$45 billion is provided through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to pay for a broad range of activities including housing, shelter, and health care services, as long as the funds do not duplicate assistance provided by HHS, HUD, or other federal agencies. *Distribution: [FEMA is working](#) directly with state and local governments and the private sector to coordinate response. States, tribes, and territories [can apply for funding here](#).*
- **USDT Coronavirus Relief Fund:** \$150 billion is provided to states through the U.S Department of the Treasury (USDT) to finance any "necessary expenditure" related to COVID-19. *Distribution: By law, the federal government must distribute these funds by the end of April and more information is forthcoming. See [estimated allocations](#) to each state.*

- **SAMHSA Emergency Grants:** \$200 million is provided through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) for “crisis intervention services, mental and substance use disorder treatment, and other related recovery supports.” *Distribution: applications are open for state governments to apply through April 10 and following this date will be open as funds remain. Learn more [from SAMHSA](#).*
- **HHS Public Health & Social Services Emergency Fund:** **4/28 update:** \$175 billion total is provided through the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), for providers who participate in Medicare and/or Medicaid who are actively engaged in testing and treating patients with COVID-19 (this is \$75 billion more than originally allocated). HHS distributed a portion of [\\$50 billion for Medicare providers](#) in April. This fund will also be used to reimburse providers for treatment of uninsured COVID-19 patients ([register for the program now](#) and submit claims starting in May). *Distribution: **Portions of this fund will be distributed directly to providers. Other portions of the fund, such as payments for treatment of the uninsured, require providers to enroll in the program and file for claims at [CovidUninsuredClaim.HRSA.gov](#)**.* What’s next: An April 22 HHS [press release](#) details distribution and enrollment requirements, as well as funds going to rural providers, and plans for additional allocations. Further portions of this fund may be specified for Medicaid providers and/or health centers. HHS will continue to [announce details](#).
- **FCC COVID-19 Telehealth Program:** \$200 million is available through the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) telehealth program to help providers respond to COVID-19 through the purchase of technology, internet services, and telehealth hardware. *Distribution: **providers are to apply directly for these funds** through the FCC [on this portal](#).*

3. What should HCH community members be doing now to maximize funds?

- **Document and record all spending, losses, and future needs related to COVID-19:** While the federal government is working to distribute new funds in a timely manner, it will be weeks before many resources are available. Keep a record of financial losses and changes, along with hard copy details of your expected needs so you are prepared to advocate and apply when resources are available. Note the importance of delineating the use of new funds appropriately and using the correct codes for each source.
- **Collaborate and communicate with your partners:** State and local emergency authorities should be conducting needs assessments to determine the resources needed to effectively respond to COVID-19. Many governing bodies also created committees or stakeholder groups to guide the expenditure of new funding they receive for COVID-19 response efforts. Make sure you are communicating your specific needs to your public health authority, emergency response systems, Continuums of Care (CoCs), and any other partners working to secure resources in your community. Reference our [Issue Brief on Needed Actions from Public Health and Emergency Response Systems](#) and **4/28 update: new resource:** [Issue Brief on Comprehensive Testing & Services For People Experiencing Homelessness](#)
- **Strongly advocate for needed resources:** Talk with your elected officials as well as community partners and other policymakers to ensure the needs of homeless populations (and their providers) are prioritized amid the distribution of funds and other resources. Assuring that newly established facilities will be adequately staffed to provide necessary health and other supports may require extensive education and advocacy.

4. How will access to benefits change for my clients?

Social benefit programs, such as SSI, SSDI, and SNAP/food stamps, will continue to be paid on a regular schedule. The federal government has taken considerable measures to keep safety net programs fully funded during this crisis. See more on [food benefits for consumers here](#) and [housing benefits for consumers](#).

5. Will people without homes receive the “stimulus checks”?

Recent legislation included “economic impact payments” of \$1,200 going directly to individuals making under \$75,000 a year (note: scammers will use a number of terms to describe these payments, but “economic impact payments” is the official term). Most people who filed taxes will receive the checks automatically or must file retroactively [using this form](#) by December 31. Those who receive SSI/SSDI will receive the payment in the same way as their benefits. [See our FAQ updated 4/28](#) with a link to the IRS Question Portal about how people without a home or with no/low income can receive the payment.

6. What comes next?

4/28 update: Congress is working on a fourth major spending bill, expected to pass in the next few weeks and likely the last one before the November elections. The Council is continuing to advocate for more resources for health care providers and supports for people experiencing homelessness. See an outline of congressional asks on [housing](#) and [health centers](#), subscribe to our [Mobilizer action alert](#), and check our [COVID-19 policy page](#) for action alerts and updates.

7. What else do I need to know?

There are many other provisions in COVID-19 federal legislation that will make an impact on the HCH community, to include:

- **Student loan programs** through the [National Health Service Corps](#) and [Student Loan Payments](#).
- **4/28 update: Small business loan and payment protection programs** for which health centers (and look-alikes) with under 500 employees and many 501c3 nonprofits are eligible for through the [Small Business Administration](#)
- **Medicaid** on Kaiser Family Foundation's [Medicaid Programs and State Budgets](#) and 1135 Emergency Authority Waivers [waiver tracker](#).
- **Resources available to individuals** on Congress' [comprehensive toolkit on COVID-19](#) including information on food, unemployment insurance, and emergency paid leave.

Do you have questions about federal resources and legislation as they relate to the Health Care for the Homeless Community? Please contact Regina Reed at 443-286-5537 or reed@nhchc.org.