

Human Services Information Sharing Regarding COVID-19

March 25, 2021

Understanding the American Rescue Plan

Summary Notes

1. Hilary Denk, District Director, Office of Representative Bill Foster, provides a high-level overview of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (please see accompanying slide deck):

- a. New information is coming every day. Here are recent announcements:
 - i. Economic impact payments are underway, 127 million payments already made. Some are coming as Electronic Impact Payments (EIP cards, see <https://www.irs.gov/coronavirus/economic-impact-payment-information-center>). Call us if you need help for your clients.
 - ii. The FEMA program for funeral reimbursements should be online in April, will allow up to \$9k per funeral and up to \$35k per family, going back to January 1, 2020. Website (<https://foster.house.gov/>) will update regularly.
 - iii. \$6 billion to Federally Qualified Health Centers for vaccine assistance will be distributed at beginning of April.
 - iv. Keep us advised if you see places where vaccine is not getting deployed.
 - v. The Small Business Administration is getting an enormous infusion of funds for job creation and reinstating businesses that have closed or are on the edge.
 - vi. There will be a large appropriation for infrastructure development, and jobs that bring better compensation, emerging from the Transportation and Infrastructure committees of the House.
 - vii. FEMA announced cost sharing adjustments for all the major disaster declarations – will be matched 100%.
 - viii. The IRS has published new guidance and resources regarding the ways that advocates and community organizations can partner to provide outreach to vulnerable populations during the pandemic. Find the description here: <https://www.ssa.gov/news/press/releases/2021/#3-2021-3>

- b. Community Project Funding - All the congressional offices are working on community project funding. You may have received outreach from congressional office. This is similar, but different, from the old earmarks process. Limited to nonprofits, government entities, each district may identify 10 projects to submit for consideration, the deadline is extremely tight. Rep. Foster invites your ideas by April 15. This is best for projects you know are ready to go, capital, training, equipment, things you know you can purchase in the next year. Happy to answer questions. Please visit <https://foster.house.gov/community-projects>
- c. Now, to the slide deck and the American Rescue Plan:
 - i. Regarding State and Local Fiscal Aid, the main issue for social service agencies is this: you have the opportunity to partner with municipalities, counties and states. A lot of your local towns will receive funds. Some will need it to replace lost revenue. But, if that revenue shortfall is not there, they have opportunity to partner with social services for other COVID-response services. Reach out to your municipality.
 1. Metro areas will get money directly, Aurora, Jolie, Naperville, Chicago. The rest comes through state channels.
 2. There will be strict reporting. Make sure you have the capacity to carry through.
 - ii. Schools and colleges funding:
 1. A lot will go directly to school districts. Significant amount of money. Primarily for safety. Expand nursing, mental health. Also looking at broadband. Find ways to help the students who missed learning most because of remote environment. Also \$800 million for wraparound services to homeless students. \$2.75B going to private schools – who might need to partner with community organizations for services. \$10B for screening and testing.
 2. Includes rapid saliva testing for schools advocated by Rep. Foster.
 3. Higher education funds helpful for retraining, to get back into workforce, and students crushed by student debt.
 - iii. Housing and homelessness provisions – Mary will cover this. Please keep our office advised on how these are spent and let us know if there are barriers.
 - iv. Fortunately, Rep. Underwood had a significant part of her Healthcare Affordability Act incorporated into the American Rescue Plan.

1. Special open enrollment for Affordable Care Act has been extended now to August 15.
 2. We are pleased that this act will allow Illinois residents more tax credits, 130k additional residents will be eligible for tax credits, and 19k in will be able to get health care at no cost. We encourage people to sign up.
 3. Medicaid expansion is good for the whole country.
- v. Human services opportunities. Most of these are existing programs receiving additional funding, and you are already familiar with the programs. If any experience issues with policy language or funds deployment, please let us know. With any kind of large new legislation like this, sometimes unintended policy consequences come so fixes are needed – so keep us advised.
1. The best way to get that information is anecdotal stories. Good data is good too. Those individual stories are extremely helpful for us to hear.
 2. If you are looking for support for grant applications, please reach out to your congressional office or offices, and we are happy to sign on to letters that will support your good work.
- vi. Direct payments and tax credits. See the Question and Answers from the google document, below. Please share your questions with us. This is really helpful as your questions go from us to the agencies, Social Security Administration, Health & Human Services, Internal Revenue Service - they get these questions, and it helps them development FAQs. That already happened with your questions to the Google document – HUD has updated their fact sheet already as a result of your question?
1. More than 5 million children will be lifted out of poverty due to these payments and credits, according to Columbia university.
 2. There is a strong goal to make these permanent. We need to hear from you about how it is working. And we need your advocacy to make it permanent. We want this to be bipartisan. We want everybody to have the opportunity for a full and healthy life, and so many families do not have that opportunity today because of poverty.
 3. The Child tax credit is pretty dramatic -- and the child and dependent care tax credit is a very big expansion, and the earned income tax credit is significant, too.

4. This requires that people file tax returns. This is our concern. We want to partner with you in any way to get the word out. Let us know what you need, if you do this work, so that every family can take advantage of these.
 5. CDCTC will be received throughout the year, but these others will only be received with filings of tax returns.
 6. IRS is expanding their trainings locally (see attachment to these notes). We can partner with you to make sure you have someone from IRS present for training your agency or community.
 7. Tax credit expansions are for tax year 2021. The goal is to make some of these permanent.
- vii. Questions and answers submitted in advance (thank you to Hilary Denk for getting answers):

Will HUD consider the new monthly childcare payments as income when calculating client rent portions? It is my understanding that stimulus checks are not part of their rent calculations.

From HUD: Stimulus checks are not included in rent calculations. We are updating our FAQs so that this is clear.

With changes to the taxing of unemployment benefits and the ACA calculations, how is the IRS handling returns that have already been submitted under the old rules? As a Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) site, we currently have about 80 returns impacted (70 already submitted and the balance being held).

For UI and already filed claims, the IRS is saying: "If you have already filed your 2020 Form 1040 or 1040-SR, you should not file an amended return at this time. The IRS will issue additional guidance as soon as possible."

For those they are holding, they should follow the instructions for Schedule 1, Line 7.

Here's the full text on the web:

<https://www.irs.gov/forms-pubs/new-exclusion-of-up-to-10200-of-unemployment-compensation>

How will the funds provided under the new child tax credit be handled for TANF and SNAP benefit calculations? Meaning, can a family receive both TANF and child tax credit funds?

The payments are an advance on their tax credit, rather than income, so it should not impact eligibility for TANF (which is generally based on an income test) and families who meet the

requirements for TANF under existing law should not see a change due to this change. In other words, a tax refund does not count toward a means-tested program.

The TANF benefits provided in the ARP were what is called “non-recurrent short-term benefits,” which means they don’t/can’t count as income for other means-tested programs. The CTC (and other tax credits), by law do not count as income, either. So yes, you could get both pandemic TANF and the CTC, and you could also get regular TANF benefits along with both of those sources of assistance.

Additional information that may be helpful: <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/26/6409>

26 U.S. Code § 6409. Refunds disregarded in the administration of Federal programs and federally assisted programs

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, any refund (or advance payment with respect to a refundable credit) made to any individual under this title shall not be taken into account as income, and shall not be taken into account as resources for a period of 12 months from receipt, for purposes of determining the eligibility of such individual (or any other individual) for benefits or assistance (or the amount or extent of benefits or assistance) under any Federal program or under any State or local program financed in whole or in part with Federal funds.

(Added [Pub. L. 111–312, title VII, § 728\(a\)](#), Dec. 17, 2010, [124 Stat. 3317](#); amended [Pub. L. 112–240, title I, § 103\(d\)](#), Jan. 2, 2013, [126 Stat. 2320](#).)

2. **Mary Keating, DuPage County Director of Community Services, regarding housing and homeless provisions of ARP in DuPage County.**

- a. First a look back to where we have been in 2020, then a look forward to the American Rescue Plan. About a year ago, congregate shelters were closing down. Initially we provided county funding to assist homeless serving agencies. With the CARES Act, funds became available (Coronavirus relief funds, CDBG-CV, CSBG-CV, ESG-CV, Older Americans Act). So, the county began partnering with agencies (such as Metropolitan Family Services, DuPagePads, Catholic Charities, 360 Youth Services) to provide shelter in hotels. DuPage County provided funding through Aurora to Hesed House, to weatherize facilities and expand capacity, and Hesed then partnered with DuPagePads. Last fall, DuPage County allocated \$7 mil in emergency relief funds to DuPage Community Services; the county provided COVID-19 assistance to nonprofit organizations – and partnered with eight agencies to deploy rental assistance and distributed \$2.3 mil (average household award was \$3,500) in a 4-month period. This is very large compared to the “before times,” when all the rent assistance combined allocated \$1.4 million over the entire year of 2019.

- i. In 2020, we began using CDBG funds to help paying water bills. The December 2020 COVID Relief Bill created a new federal program for water bill assistance; it will be administered through State of Illinois, we are awaiting news from the state on how they will get the funds to the community. It will be similar to LIHEAP, but more complex, as there are more than 40 water providers in DuPage County.
- b. Now to the American Rescue Plan. Here are some things coming directly to the DuPage County and the Department of Community Services
 - i. Emergency rental assistance. This program was created in the December 2020 COVID relief bill, as the first federal package to be used exclusively for emergency rent assistance. Congress allocated \$25B total, with \$27.3M for DuPage. The American Rescue plan adds \$21B to the total, so we are estimating \$23M for DuPage.
 - ii. There is additional funding also for these: water bill assistance, LIHEAP assistance, Older Americans Act, and HOME funding (additional \$5B total nationally, and approximately \$6M for DuPage).
 1. There is an expanded opportunity to use HOME funding. DuPage will get about 3.5 times the usual allocation. ARP expands the potential use of HOME funds to allow the development of non-congregate shelter – for instance if an agency wanted to purchase a hotel and use as a shelter space. We are awaiting HUD guidance.
- c. Regarding the new way to manage the Emergency Rental Assistance program. Given the size and scope of the new funding, DuPage knew we had to find a way to manage something at this much larger scale. Illinois Housing Development Authority ran a statewide rental assistance program last fall and distributed \$200M. They offered to manage our program with this new allocation. DuPage, and Kane, and Will, all agreed to enter into partnership with IHDA. The goal is a coordinated program, where we can gain from each other’s marketing and outreach. Details not finalized yet. A barrage of new information is expected in the next two to three weeks. Here are the basics:
 - i. Eligibility: At or below 80% of area median income
 - ii. Priority groups: Households below 50% AMI or unemployed over 90 days
 - iii. Coverage provided: Up to 12 months arrearage + 3 months prospective
 - iv. Coverage period: May 2020-July 2021

- v. Maximum Grant: \$20,000
- vi. Assistance paid to: Landlords (unless unresponsive – there are a number of conditions that must be met to pay tenant directly)
- vii. Current Plan is for Landlord Application Period: April-May 2021 – the tenant will need to certify their own information in this process to get the funding
- viii. Current Plan is for Tenant Application Period: May-June 2021
- ix. An important thing to know is this: Tenants should be prepared with email address, photo ID (issued by any government), documentation of income. **No restriction on immigrant status.**
- x. In summary, for rental assistance through DuPage County Community Services, here are key links:
 - 1. 630-407-6500. Information and referral line for DuPage County
 - 2. Go to upagecris.org and Sign up for newsletter to get updates on the rental assistance program.
 - 3. There is preliminary information on the IHDA website: www.ihda.org

3. Q&A

- a. Will there be training for the nuts and bolts of the portal? Mary: IHDA has committed to providing a webinar to staff of agencies that will be helping and maintain a recording.
- b. With LIHEAP, will cooling be included, along with heating? Mary: We haven't seen anything yet but can raise the question with the state.
- c. With the water assistance program, will that be separate? Mary: It remains to be seen, but it may be more similar to a rental assistance app.
- d. How will the tax credits relate to TANF and SNAP? Hilary: Payments are an advance on tax credit, rather than income, so will not affect TANF eligibility. In other words, a tax refund should not be considered income toward a means-tested program. The goal is to lift people out of poverty and add assistance.
- e. Hilary: Regarding the IRS handling of unemployment benefits and changes to the Affordable Care Act, IRS will develop a plan for those who have already filed. If this doesn't happen, reach out to your congressional office!

- f. Is the email address necessary only for registration to IHDA? Mary: it will be needed for the entire duration, and back and forth with IHDA. Mary will raise the issue with IHDA, of persons who do not have email addresses or capacity.

4. Comments:

- a. Theresa: how can we at Easter Seals in DuPage/Fox Valley assist, and be supportive, by linking with private schools who now will have new funding support to help students to return successfully to school? We provide therapy services for infants, children and adults with developmental delays and disabilities, and support for families. We are seeing a lot of young kids, under five, who have lost developmental skills, from lack of socialization and play, and many need supports now. Geographically we can expand our reach because our services are on-line as well as in person. We have a special inclusive outreach and health equity focused on bringing services to African American and Hispanic students who have faced barriers.

5. HOLD THE DATE:

- a. 3:30pm, Thursday, April 29, 2021
- b. Topic: Equitable COVID-19 Response and Recovery: the language access barrier
- c. Benedictine University Masters Level Students will present the evidence regarding the harm of language barriers and the benefits of language access, and the successful strategies used to provide language access.