



# How Local Entities Can Use COVID Relief Dollars for Early Care and Education

Louisiana has received federal COVID-19 relief money through three stimulus bills: (1) the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act, (2) the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplementary Appropriations (CRRSA) Act and (3) the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). Outlined below are opportunities for local entities to access COVID-19 relief funding for local child care efforts, as of May 2021. *Please note that this information may become more refined as additional regulatory guidance is issued.*

## Municipal and parish governments can:

**1. Use locally designated Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund dollars for early care and education related purposes:** Cities and parishes in Louisiana will receive an estimated \$1.8 billion in federal funds through the American Rescue Plan Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund.<sup>1</sup> ([Click here](#) to view estimates for cities and parishes.) Local governments can use these dollars to make investments in early care and education in the following ways:

**a. Provide grants to child care centers to help them reopen or stay open:** Local governments can help child care providers stay open, recover from significant financial losses, and cover additional costs since the beginning of the pandemic. Grants can also be used for increased costs due to the pandemic such as facility improvements and adaptations, personal protective equipment (PPE), incentive pay for teachers, cleaning supplies, and other needs. Early Childhood Community Networks and Ready Start Network leaders can help local government officials by connecting them to local child care providers who are most in need of relief.

**b. Increase access to child care for working families with young children:** Since the relief funds can be used to “replace lost public sector revenue to strengthen support for vital public services and help retain jobs,” local governments can fund immediate, short-term projects with the federal funding in order to use the freed up local general fund dollars for early care and education seats.<sup>2</sup> By doing so, local governments will be eligible for a dollar-for-dollar state match in their investment in early care and education through the Early Childhood Education Fund. Additionally, local governments can directly use relief funds to offer for child care subsidies to help support parents with young children (e.g. essential workers, unemployed and looking for work, or currently employed by the municipal government but earn a lower income) access high-quality child care.

**c. Compensate child care workers:** The pandemic highlighted how essential child care workers are in keeping the economy running. In Louisiana, child care workers earn a median wage of \$9.13 per hour, the second lowest wage for this type of employment in the United States.<sup>3</sup> Local governments can use federal relief to “provide premium pay directly, or through grants to private employers...to childcare workers, educators, and school staff.”<sup>4</sup> These types of supports can help incentivize child care workers “to return to work without driving up tuition costs for families.”<sup>5</sup> It also serves to increase quality, as Louisiana’s current rate of early care and education teacher turnover is high relative to the nation.

1. [https://house.louisiana.gov/housefiscal/COVID19/03\\_2021\\_LocalARPAEstimatedDistribution.pdf](https://house.louisiana.gov/housefiscal/COVID19/03_2021_LocalARPAEstimatedDistribution.pdf)

2. <https://home.treasury.gov/system/files/136/SLFRP-Fact-Sheet-FINAL1-508A.pdf>

3. <http://www.agendaforchildren.org/uploads/documents/kidscount/Wage-Enhancement-overview.pdf>

4. <https://home.treasury.gov/system/files/136/SLFRP-Fact-Sheet-FINAL1-508A.pdf>

5. <http://www.agendaforchildren.org/uploads/documents/kidscount/Child%20Care%20Wage%20Enhancement%20final.pdf>



# COVID-19 Federal Relief Funds for Early Care and Education in Louisiana

## Early Childhood Community Networks can:

**1. Apply for Community Child Care Recovery Grants:** Early Childhood Community Networks can apply for the Louisiana Department of Education (LDE) 2021 COVID-19 Community Child Care Recovery Grants, which are CRRSA-funded grants that support child care recovery locally.<sup>6</sup> Community Child Care Recovery Grants can be used for providing financial supports to the early childhood workforce, purchasing and distributing additional PPE/sanitation supplies, providing direct financial support to providers, promoting enrollment for families, quality improvement efforts of child care centers, at-home continuous learning supports for families, social-emotional development and/or trauma informed resources, and supports to families who are not currently enrolled in a child care program.<sup>6</sup> The RFA is linked [here](#) and the deadline to apply is Wednesday, May 26, 2021.

**2. Apply for Community Supply Building and Access Expansion Grants:** Early Childhood Community Networks can apply for the LDE 2021 Community Supply Building and Access Expansion Grant, a two-year CRRSA-funded grant that supports initiatives to increase child care supply and child care access at the local level based on a community's specific needs. The Community Supply Building and Access Expansion Grants may be used for establishing partnerships with established child care providers or community-based facilities, expanding the number of infant and toddler classrooms within existing facilities, or building child care supply in underserved areas.<sup>7</sup> The RFA is linked [here](#) and the deadline to apply is Wednesday, May 26, 2021.

## Local school boards can:

**1. Increase the number of early childhood seats:** School systems can use Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief I (ESSER), ESSER II, and ESSER III funds to create or expand early care and education programs in response to COVID-19. Systems may choose to use ESSER I or ESSER II funds to expand pre-K seats for children who qualify for pre-K under Title I or to expand birth through age 3 seats by partnering with Type III child care providers to offer additional seats for children birth through age three who qualify for early childhood education programs under Title I and “fund the costs of the program that are reasonable and necessary for the implementation of these seats.”<sup>8</sup>

**2. Partner with lead agencies to support early childhood efforts:** Lead agencies can partner with school systems to utilize CRRSA and/or ESSER II funds to support early childhood efforts. LDE guidance to school systems details that funds can be used to “support transitions into a traditional in-person pre-K or kindergarten setting, universal development screenings, social and emotional development, and continuous learning through the summer.”<sup>9</sup> Communities can also work with school systems and child care resource and referral agencies to ensure that all early childhood classrooms are utilizing high-quality curriculum and receiving professional development to support effective implementation of instructional tools and best practices; provide high-quality direct and related service support for young children with individualized education programs (IEPs) to increase inclusive opportunities within the least restrictive environment; and partner with regional child care resource and referral agencies to understand and support efforts to conduct early learning center needs assessments, enhance child care environments, and ensure the technology needs of child care centers are met.<sup>10</sup>

6. <https://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/believe/community-recovery-grant-rfa.pdf>

7. [https://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/believe/supply-building-and-access-expansion-grant-rfa.pdf?sfvrsn=6dca6718\\_2](https://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/believe/supply-building-and-access-expansion-grant-rfa.pdf?sfvrsn=6dca6718_2)

8. <https://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/achieve/access-to-high-quality-early-childhood-education.pdf>

9. <https://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/operations/achieve!-esserf-ii-planning-guidance-and-resources.pdf>

10. <https://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/operations/achieve!-esserf-ii-planning-guidance-and-resources.pdf>