

ACF Administration For Children and Families	U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES	
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PROGRAM INSTRUCTION

TO: Head Start and Early Head Start Programs Impacted by Hurricane Sandy

SUBJECT: Hurricane Sandy Emergency Relief Funds

INSTRUCTION:

Purpose

This Program Instruction is intended to assist governing bodies and key management staff in determining the funding needed to ensure full restoration of facilities, program operations, and targeted support services to Head Start and Early Head Start children, families, and program staff impacted by Hurricane Sandy, referred to as Disaster Relief funds.

Background

President Obama signed the Disaster Relief Appropriations Act, H.R. 152 (Act), on Jan. 29, 2013. The Act provides emergency funding for recovery, relief, and resiliency efforts in areas affected by Hurricane Sandy. Head Start agencies in Connecticut, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Virginia, and West Virginia may be eligible for emergency relief funds if their programs were directly impacted by Hurricane Sandy. The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) will prioritize funding programs that sustained significant damage from the Hurricane Sandy and serve a high proportion of families displaced as a result of the storm.

Eligible Head Start agencies may only apply for funding for costs not covered by commercial or self-insurance proceeds or other emergency funds received from any local, state, federal, or private sources. Applicants must attest that funds requested will not be used for costs that are reimbursed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), covered by commercial or self insurance proceeds, or from any other local, state, federal, or private sources. The Office of Head Start (OHS) will work closely with FEMA to ensure no duplication of federal funding occurs.

Funding Requests

We encourage grantees to engage in a careful assessment of needs, keeping in mind the immediate, interim, and long term consequences and associated costs resulting from this disaster. Funding requests will likely fall into five areas – facilities; materials, supplies, and equipment; program operations; enhanced mental health and social services to children and families; and training and technical assistance. Each proposed grant activity should have clear timelines for execution and completion. We have provided a brief description of each area to assist programs in preparing funding requests.

1. Facilities

Disaster Relief funds may be requested to cover costs associated with repairs, renovations, purchase, and construction. We urge grantees to take the time to make a thorough assessment of their facility needs, including outdoor play areas. Assessing structural damage or determining environmental risks that can manifest months after the initial damage occurs is critical. We encourage programs to consider obtaining the services of a structural engineer, architect, and environmental expert during the assessment phase so all costs are realized to ensure full restoration. Also, more stringent building codes are being enacted in many communities impacted by Sandy; therefore, programs should take into account the costs of adhering to these new requirements and include those costs in their funding requests.

Recipients engaging in covered activities to address physical or infrastructure damage to facilities must comply with applicable environmental and floodplain risk-related requirements. Facilities activities within the scope of 45 CFR Part 1309 must meet those requirements, and all projects must comply with applicable state, local, and municipal regulations, requirements, and codes.

If you have already used operating funds to cover facilities activities to address damage from Hurricane Sandy, you may be eligible for reimbursement if any local, state, federal, or private sources (including insurance) did not cover those documented expenses.

2. Materials, Supplies, and Equipment

Many programs reported significant losses in materials, supplies, and equipment. Programs should conduct a thorough inventory at each center impacted by Hurricane Sandy, including outdoor play areas, to ensure funding requests cover all costs necessary to replace lost or damaged equipment, materials, and supplies, including appliances (e.g., dishwashers, washing machines). Equipment requests, including buses or other vehicles needed to transport children and families, should be included since many families were left without reliable transportation and cannot drive their children to the centers on a regular basis.

3. Program Operations

Since many program services were disrupted and many of the families continue to be displaced from their homes, programs could consider increasing hours per day and/or days per year. Operating throughout the summer and/or considering a year-round model for the next two years would ensure greater stability and continuity of care and educational experiences for the children. As programs conduct ongoing community assessments, new program needs may arise, like transportation or a need to add more teaching staff to lower class sizes.

4. Enhanced Mental Health and Social Services

We know children, families, and staff have endured significant disruption and stress as a result of Hurricane Sandy. Programs must consider actions they can take in collaboration with community partners to mitigate the effects of ongoing stressors. This could result in hiring or contracting with highly qualified mental health practitioners who can work in the centers directly with the children, families, and staff. Programs may also determine the need to hire additional family workers resulting in more attention and support to each family throughout this difficult time.

5. Training and Technical Assistance

OHS will be leveraging the expertise and services of the National Training and Technical Assistance Network to support programs impacted by Hurricane Sandy. However, we recognize that each program has learned a lot as a result of experiencing this disaster and have identified actions and strategies they want to take to strengthen and build emergency response procedures, staff capacity, facilities, and professional development. This is also an opportunity for local programs to work and collaborate with other early childhood programs in their communities.

Award Information and Restrictions

Disaster Relief funds are only available to grantees within states subject to FEMA major disaster designation: Connecticut, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Virginia, and West Virginia. As previously noted, Disaster Relief funding may not be used for costs covered by commercial or self-insurance proceeds or other emergency funds received from any local, state, federal, or private sources. Any Disaster Relief funds which are expended for costs subsequently paid by commercial or self-insurance proceeds or other emergency funds received from any local, state, federal, or private sources must be repaid to the awarding agency.

OHS will closely monitor all Disaster Relief grant awards. Reporting content and frequency requirements will be established, and on-site visits may be required for certain funded activities. Quarterly financial and programmatic reporting will be required of all recipient grantees.

Disaster Relief grant award amounts are not part of the recipient's base grant (as defined in the Head Start Act) for the year of receipt or for subsequent years. Disaster Relief funds are not subject to the cost allocation requirements of the Head Start Act and applicable fiscal regulations.

Per Section 904(c) of the Disaster Relief Appropriations Act¹, all Disaster Relief funds must be expended within 24 months of the award date, unless a class waiver has been approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Any funds not expended must be returned to HHS unless an individual waiver is submitted to OMB for review and approval. No Cost Extensions are prohibited unless a waiver has been granted by OMB. Additional guidance on the waiver process is forthcoming.

Submission of Funding Applications

All funding requests must be submitted on an SF-424 Funding Application to your Regional Office. Additional project or activity information may be required depending on the proposed use of funds. All activities and projects must include a timeline clearly indicating when significant project milestones or activities will be executed or occur and when the overall project or activity will be completed.

Grantees engaging in facilities activities covered by 45 CFR Part 1309 and activities subject to environmental- and floodplain-related compliance requirements, such as those identified by the Hurricane Sandy Rebuilding Task Force, will receive intensive support from OHS to support regulatory compliance. This Task Force was established by Executive Order 13632. If you are requesting funds for major renovation, construction, or purchase of facilities, you must also submit a separate application fully compliant with the requirements under 45 CFR 1309.10 – 1309.11.

OHS will work with grantees to identify facilities, the environment, and floodplain-related compliance requirements for proposed facilities projects. If you intend to apply for funding that requires a Part 1309 application, please contact Ms. Nicole Richardson to schedule a pre-application planning call at your earliest convenience. Ms. Richardson can be reached at (212) 264-2890, extension 113 or Nicole.Richardson@acf.hhs.gov.

Please contact your program specialist and grant specialist if you have any questions about submitting a funding application. Please include requests to waive non-federal share as necessary with your applications. We are committed to supporting your program throughout this rebuilding and restoration phase.

Thank you for your work on behalf of children and families.

/Yvette Sanchez Fuentes/

Yvette Sanchez Fuentes
Director
Office of Head Start

¹ Disaster Relief Appropriations Act, Section 904(c): "Funds for grants provided by this division shall be expended by the grantees within the 24-month period following the agency's obligation of funds for the grant, unless, in accordance with guidance to be issued by the Director of OMB, the Director waives this requirement for a particular

grant program and submits a written justification for such waiver to the Committees on Appropriations of the House of Representatives and the Senate. In the case of such grants, the agency shall include a term in the grant that requires the grantee to return to the agency any funds not expended within the 24-month period."