



HOUSE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS
CHAIRMAN RICHARD E. NEAL

Emergency Assistance for Disadvantaged Individuals, Families, and Children in the Heroes Act

The Heroes Act provides \$10 billion for essential emergency assistance to vulnerable children, families, and individuals, including those who may not be receiving other assistance during the pandemic. It leverages existing programs and pathways to provide the assistance more quickly and ensure that funds reach the local level in states, U.S. territories, and tribal communities. The pathways to help include:

- **\$9.6 billion to be distributed to states, the District of Columbia, and U.S. Territories for Emergency Aid and Services.** The funding would be distributed using the Social Services Block Grant, and states would be required to pass through at least 50 percent of funds to counties, cities, and community-based organizations with experience serving disadvantaged individuals, families, and communities. States, counties, and other pass-through organizations would be required to use the funds to provide essential emergency assistance, including cash, non-cash, and in-kind disaster relief aid to help with basic wellbeing necessities like food, shelter, and needed supplies, for the cost of administering those services and maintaining the social services infrastructure, and to connect families and individuals with other services, benefits, and payments that they are eligible for but not receiving.
- **\$400 Million to tribes and tribal organizations** to provide emergency assistance and services, including cash, non-cash, and in-kind disaster relief aid to help with basic wellbeing necessities.
- **Emergency Assistance to Older Foster Youth:** \$50 Million to the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program, and a 30% funding increase to its Educational & Training Voucher (ETV) program, along with programmatic flexibilities necessary to serve older foster youth during the COVID-19 pandemic through January 31, 2021.
- **Emergency Assistance to Families Through Home Visiting Programs:** \$100 Million to home visiting programs funded under the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting program (MIECHV), and programmatic flexibilities through January 31, 2021 to ensure MIECHV can continue serving low-income families during pregnancy, early childhood, and parenthood.

Frequently Asked Questions:

Will the help be available quickly?

Yes. The US Department of Health & Human Services is directed to issue these funds on an expedited basis for immediate expenditure at the state and local level, and recipients must use the funds promptly.

How will local governments be involved?

For the Pandemic Emergency Assistance and Services, half of the funds will be distributed through the state and directly granted to county and local governments or to community-based organizations that serve disadvantaged people. All funds are distributed for the purpose of providing disaster relief emergency services.

Will U.S. Territories receive Emergency Assistance and Services funding?

Yes. The funds to US states, territories, and District of Columbia will be distributed according to the SSBG formula. Grants to Puerto Rico, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands are based on their share of Title XX funds in FY 1981. Grants to American Samoa are based on the relative size of its population compared to the population of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

How will funds Emergency Assistance and Services funds be distributed to tribes?

The \$400 million Pandemic Emergency Assistance and Services tribal funds are available to cash-poor tribes and tribal organizations that are current grantees of either the Low Income Heat & Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) or the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG). The funds will be allocated according to proportionate funding of LIHEAP and CSBG tribal grantees.

What kind of services count as disaster relief emergency services?

Disaster relief emergency services can include short term cash, non-cash, or in-kind services. This could include emergency payments to utility costs, provision of emergency food, preventing housing eviction, purchasing supplies necessary for wellbeing, purchasing supplies necessary for the prevention of infectious disease.

What about parents who are sheltering-in-place with young children and cannot easily obtain necessary supplies?

For funds and flexibilities available through Emergency Assistance to Families Through Home Visiting Programs, home visitors can provide families with household essentials such as diapers, hand sanitizer, soap, and pre-paid grocery cards to purchase household necessities during the pandemic, such as infant thermometers.

Many older foster youth have been sent away from college campuses and don't know where to go. How does this bill help them?

The Emergency Assistance to Older Foster Youth funds and flexibilities temporarily remove the restriction that prevents more than 30% of Chafee funds from being spent on housing, and also temporarily lifts the requirement to demonstrate progress in an educational degree; an older foster youth who suddenly finds themselves leaving college during the pandemic, and paying for their own housing, could benefit from these new temporary flexibilities.

How can my community get connected to the help that already exists out there, including unemployment benefits or tax rebates for those who do not typically file income taxes?

The funds may be used to support the operational and outreach costs associated with connecting people and communities to existing services. Examples of existing services include assistance with filing for their \$1200 cash rebate, assistance with applying for Medicaid health insurance, assistance with applying for WIC, SNAP, TANF, MIECHV and other assistance programs, or education on types of circumstances that would make someone a good candidate to apply for Unemployment Compensation or Pandemic Unemployment Assistance.