



COVID-19: PUBLIC POLICY UPDATE

March 27, 2020

The Families First Coronavirus Response Act (H.R. 6201) and the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act (H.R. 748) were signed into law in March 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Together, these bills provide free coronavirus testing, establish short-term paid leave, enhance unemployment insurance, expand food assistance programs, and increase federal funding for housing assistance. For most of these provisions, relevant federal agencies will be working directly with states to get the resources and relief to the families that need it. The NFP-NSO will be providing supplemental information as it becomes available.

KEY PROVISIONS THAT BENEFIT NFP FAMILIES:

Direct Cash Assistance for Most Americans

- Each American adult will receive \$1200, and \$500 for each child under 17. The full payment is available for individuals making up to \$75,000 (individual) and \$150,000 (married). The IRS has indicated that it will send this money direct to individuals based on their last filed tax return (2018 or 2019) within the next month.

Nutrition

- \$500 million for the **Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)** to provide nutrition assistance for children and their mothers who have lost their jobs as a result of the outbreak.
- \$15.5 billion in additional funding for **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)** to ensure all Americans, including seniors and children receive the food they need.

(Additional nutrition assistance funding was included in anticipation of more families needing WIC and SNAP but is unlikely to be used to boost the amount a family already receives.)

- \$450 million for the **Emergency Food Assistance Program** to help local food banks meet increased need for low-income Americans.



- A provision that allows the Department of Agriculture to approve state plans to provide **emergency Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) food assistance to households with children who would otherwise receive free or reduced-price school meals** in the event that their school is closed (The MEAL Act).
- Allows participants to be **certified for WIC without being physically present** at a WIC clinic.
- **Suspends work requirements** for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) during the emergency.
- Allows states to request waivers for **emergency CR-SNAP benefits to existing SNAP households** up to the maximum monthly allotment.

Health Care

- Provides **free COVID-19 testing** to all Americans, regardless of insurance.
- Medicaid and CHIP, which cover over 45 million children between the two programs, **will cover diagnostic testing**, including the cost of a provider visit to receive testing, with no cost to the patient.
- **Increases Medicaid allotments** for U.S. Territories.
- The bill ensures that **American Indians and Alaskan Natives do not experience cost sharing** for COVID-19 testing.
- **Reauthorizes Healthy Start**, which is a program that provides grants to improve access to services for women and their families, who may need additional support during the public health emergency related to COVID19.

Paid Sick Leave, Unemployment Insurance, and Family and Medical Leave

- Provides employees of employers with under 500 employees the right to two weeks (10 work days) of **fully paid leave** when they are sick, or two weeks of paid leave at 2/3 of their normal rate to care for a family member.
- Provides employees of employers with under 500 employees the right to take **up to 12-weeks of job-protected leave**.
- Provides **\$1 billion in 2020 emergency grants to states to meet the increased need for unemployment insurance benefits** and increases benefits, expands eligibility and **offers workers an additional \$600 a week** through July 31, 2020 on top of what state unemployment programs pay.
- **Creates a Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program** which will be available for a large swath of workers who are not otherwise eligible for state unemployment insurance.



Housing

- **\$3 billion for housing providers** to help more than 4.5 million low-income households made up of more than 9.6 million individuals currently assisted by HUD to safely remain in their homes or access temporary housing assistance in response to economic and housing disruptions caused by COVID-19.

Tribes

- **\$300 million for Indian Housing Native American Programs**, which includes \$200 million for the Indian Housing Block Grant program and \$100 million for imminent threats to health and safety as a result of COVID-19.
- **\$1.032 billion in resources to support the tribal health system** during the pandemic, including expanded support for medical services, equipment, supplies and public health education for IHS direct service, tribally operated and urban Indian health care facilities; expanded funding for purchased/referred care; and new investments for telehealth services.
- **\$453 million to Bureau of Indian Affairs** to provide aid to tribal governments; support welfare assistance and social service programs, including assistance to tribal members affected by the coronavirus crisis; expand public safety and emergency response capabilities.

Child Care

- **\$3.5 billion to states for the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Program** for immediate assistance to child care providers to prevent them from going out of business and to otherwise support child care for families, including for healthcare workers, first responders, and others playing critical roles during this crisis.
- **\$750 million for grants to all Head Start programs** to help them respond to coronavirus-related needs of children and families, including making up for lost learning time.

If you have questions or need more information, please contact our Policy & Government Affairs Department at pga@nursefamilypartnership.org. For more information on NFP's response to the COVID-19 crisis, please go to www.nursefamilypartnership.org/covid-19 or [click here](#) to see our latest communication to our network partners.