




MEMORANDUM

TO: Superintendents

FROM: Dr. Michael Johnson, Commissioner 

DATE: April 28, 2021

SUBJECT: Guidance on Federal COVID-19 Relief Funding

As you know, the State of Alaska has received federal COVID-19 relief funding through three acts:

1. Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act;
2. Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CRRSA) Act; and,
3. American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act.

These three acts add up to approximately \$504 million available for distribution to Alaska's school districts for allocation by local school boards to their schools.

When applying to the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) for this funding, you are required to sign the application assurances and certification packet. Those assurances form a binding agreement between the district, DEED, and the U.S. Department of Education, to assure that you will meet all legal requirements in accordance with state and federal laws, regulations, and rules. Those assurances apply to program activities and expenditures of funds. Compliance to general and specific program assurances is the legal responsibility of the district under the authorization of the local school district board of education and the direction of the superintendent.

In addition to the application assurances and certification packet, you are required to provide a budget and budget narrative explaining how your district intends to spend the federal COVID-19 relief funding.

It is your responsibility to communicate to your constituents that this approximately \$504 million in funding statewide is a one-time addition to your budgets. You should not make

permanent programmatic commitments with these funds. You should communicate clearly to your communities the temporary nature of this funding and its intended purpose. In order to minimize the impact when these funds expire, school districts must wisely invest these one-time funds. For example, consider how you can focus on a limited number of short-term goals that promise the maximum benefit for your students in the years ahead.

The most lasting outcome of this money should be safer schools and more successful students.

As you use the funds to recover from the past year, pay careful attention to the U.S. Department of Education's guidance.

Transparency is your friend. School boards and superintendents will be held accountable by your community for the effective use of these welcomed resources. Communicate consistently and thoroughly with your local school board, teachers, parents, students, and community how your district intends to spend the funds, your plan for implementation, and your desired outcomes.

Furthermore, it is important to understand that since these are one-time funds and given the State of Alaska's current fiscal situation, that you do not anticipate a replacement of these funds with State funding when they expire.

We have experienced a year of unprecedented challenges. \$504 million in additional funding for Alaska's students represents an unprecedented opportunity for our students. Let me be the first to thank you for the extra work, planning, and communication that you will invest for your students to manage these funds.

Thank you for all you do to ensure an excellent education for every student every day.