

CARES Act Funding Update

September 29, 2020



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Background

County received approximately \$194 million in Coronavirus Relief Funds for:

- Necessary expenditures due to the public health emergency with respect to COVID-19;
- Expenditures not accounted for in the budget most recently approved as of the date of enactment; and
- Were incurred during the period beginning March 1 and ends on December 30, 2020.

Guidance has been broadly interpreted to include:

- Expenses to “directly respond to the emergency” AND
- “Second-order effects” including “economic support to those suffering from employment or business disruption...”

NC Constitution governs services provided by local governments; cannot fund a service that is inconsistent with statutes, even if allowed at federal level

Federal and State Guidance Language

Federal CARES Act Guidance

If determined to be a necessary expenditure, funds may be used to provide emergency financial assistance to individuals and families.

Individuals must demonstrate a financial need due to COVID-19.

Funds may be provided to cover the costs of distance learning or in-person learning (meeting CDC guidelines).

Statutory Authority for Counties

NCGS 153A-376 authorizes counties:

- To engage in community development programs and activities, including childcare and education.
- To assist persons of low and moderate income with certain necessary services.
- To accept, appropriate, and expend federal and state funds for said activities.

School Operations in Wake County

In late March, WCPSS and other schools in the County closed physical locations and moved to virtual learning, with a plan to return to in-person learning for the 2020-2021 school year

WCPSS and other schools in the County began the 2021 school year either in an all virtual format or with alternate schedules

- In accordance with guidance released from state
- Continue to promote public health and safety protocols
- Approximately 50% of WCPSS student population enrolled in virtual academy at least through the fall semester

Update to WCPSS Reopening Plans

September 17

Governor Cooper announced that school districts can reopen elementary schools for daily, in-person instruction on October 5

September 23 – BOE Met to Receive Superintendent's Phased Reopening

October 26: Pre-K, Elementary, and Regional Programs return on a 3-week rotation until November 16, when they would return full-time

November 9: Grades 6-12 return on a 3-week rotation and remain on the rotation through the first semester

Students enrolled in Virtual Academy through the fall would remain with the option to re-enroll for the spring semester

September 29 – BOE Special Meeting

May vote on reopening plan as presented or with other alternatives.

Students and Parents Facing Challenges

Whether in an all-virtual or alternate schedule format, younger students or students with special needs need structured, safe spaces to learn

Whether in an all-virtual or alternate schedule format, parents may need to send their child(ren) to a facility because:

- They cannot stay home because their job does not allow telework
- They may need to care for other family members
- Other impacts or situations related to COVID-19

Community Providing Solutions

Traditional Childcare Facilities

Licensed, private childcare providers across the County have been providing school-aged childcare for several months

WCPSS

Utilizing staff to provide learning environments for children of staff

County provided \$29 million in CRF funding to WCPSS to cover operating needs due to COVID-19

WCPSS planning phased reopening

Families & Schools Together

FAST Initiative coordinates partnership of several organizations to provide virtual learning centers:

YMCA of the Triangle and Boys & Girls Club

Marbles Museum

Municipal Parks & Recreation departments

Others

Community and faith-based organizations also working with parents facing virtual learning and childcare challenges

What problem are we trying to solve?

The cost of supervision of school-aged children at alternate sites during school hours may cause undue financial hardship on certain households

NCDHHS has been providing school-aged childcare subsidies to income-qualifying households sending children to licensed, private childcare centers

- Don't know how much longer they will support this additional subsidy
- Based on income, some parents still required to pay a portion of the fees

Because community organizations are not required to meet certain licensing requirements, parents who send their children to these facilities are not eligible for NCDHHS childcare subsidies

Use CARES Act Funds for School-Aged Childcare Subsidies

Utilize up to \$5 million of the County's CRF to provide childcare subsidies to qualifying moderate-to-low income households

High-level criteria:

- Applicant must be a Wake County resident
- Will utilize moderate-to-low income thresholds used for WakeHelps and Housing programs
- Applicant must certify an impact on household due to COVID-19
- Only for children enrolled in grades K-6
- County subsidy capped at \$100/week/child
- Retroactive to October 1 and available until December 30 (or until funding is depleted)
- Households currently receiving state subsidy will automatically be eligible to receive subsidy to cover parent fees (up to the County subsidy)

School-Aged Childcare Subsidies Program Administration

Human Services

HS will administer the program:

- Hire temporary staffing to handle anticipated surge in application and administration
- Provide subsidy directly to the childcare provider
- Utilize online application process, similar to WakeHelps
- Anticipate start date of October 15

Eligible Childcare Facilities

- Licensed by NCDHHS - Division of Child Development and Early Education
- A Community-Based Organization authorized to provide care for school-age children at a Remote Learning Facility registered with NCDHHS pursuant to SL2020-97
- A Community-Based Organization authorized to operate a Remote Learning Facility for school-age children pursuant to a contract with the Wake County Public School System in accordance with 10A NCAC 09 .3102

Summary

County received \$194 million in direct Coronavirus Relief Funds to support the County's response and recovery efforts

County's first priority is to ensure sufficient funding supports our responsibility to contain and mitigate the public health emergency

County's CRF funding plan has capacity to support populations financially impacted by COVID-19 and facing care issues for school-aged children

Proposed program supports children attending a variety of facilities (private/licensed childcare OR authorized community organizations), regardless of schools re-opening plans or schedules

Next Steps

TODAY:

- Receive feedback from the Board

NEXT STEPS:

- County staff finalize plans and implement operational, technical, and financial framework to launch program in mid-October



Questions & Discussion