



## **CARES Act and Grandfamilies April 2020**

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act known as the “CARES Act” authorized more than \$2 trillion to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic for individuals, governments, nonprofit organizations and for profit industries. The Act, passed March 27th, 2020, is the third package passed by Congress in response to the COVID-19 public health crisis. There are about 2.7 million children living in grandfamilies - families in which grandparents, other adult family members or close family friends are raising children with no parents in the home. This public health crisis is highlighting the unique vulnerabilities of these families and the systems barriers they face to secure their household’s health and economic stability. The following summary provides a breakdown of the law’s new funding as it pertains to grandfamilies; state and local government agencies that may serve grandfamilies; and nonprofits that are working to support grandfamilies.

The new law heavily expands funding for existing programs, but does not address many of the barriers that currently exist. Many of the programs receiving increased funds offer the potential to serve grandfamilies if advocates make local decision makers aware of the unique needs of the families in the midst of the pandemic. There will also be opportunities in the coming weeks and months to advocate for more support for grandfamilies in additional federal legislation. Stay tuned to [www.gu.org](http://www.gu.org) to get more details in the coming weeks.

### **SUPPORT FOR INDIVIDUALS, INCLUDING ADULTS AND DEPENDENTS IN GRANDFAMILIES**

**Recovery Rebates** provide direct payments to individuals with incomes up to \$99,000 (\$198,000 married) who are not dependents. Adults with adjusted gross incomes under \$75,000 (\$150,000 married) will receive \$1,200 (\$2,400 married) and an additional \$500 per child under the age of 17. Payments will be decreased by \$5 for each additional \$100 earned until \$99,000 (\$198,000 married) at which point payments phase out entirely. Individuals with non-taxable means-tested benefits such as SSI are eligible for the rebates. Rebates are expected to be released starting April 6, 2020. Details regarding eligibility of grandfamilies and dependents within these families are being clarified by Generations United. Please check back at [www.gu.org/covid-19/](http://www.gu.org/covid-19/) as those details are more clearly defined in the coming weeks.

## FLEXIBLE FUNDING FOR LOCAL COMMUNITIES

In addition to direct payments to individuals, the federal government is providing funding to jurisdictions to address COVID-19. The **Direct Stimulus Funding to States, Territories, Local and Tribal Governments** provides \$150 billion to state, territories, local and tribal governments to use for expenses due to the COVID-19 emergency which will be allocated by population proportions. No state will receive less than \$1.25 billion. Of those state funds, 45% are set aside for local governments with populations greater than 500,000 (localities under the population of 500,000 are not eligible for the funds). There is \$8 billion designated for tribal governments. Funds can be used to pay for a) expenses incurred due to COVID-19 between March 1, 2020 and December 30, 2020 and b) expenses not accounted for in the most recently approved budget as of the bill's enactment (March 27, 2020). To see estimates for your states and communities (with populations over 500,000) the Center of Budget and Policy Priorities has a resource [here](#).

**Governors Emergency Education Relief Fund** includes \$3 billion in flexible funding to governors to provide discretionary grants to local educational agencies in communities that have been significantly affected by the public health emergency. Sixty percent of the funds are designated based on a formula for students ages 5-24 year olds and the remaining 40% is based on a formula of children under age 21. For more details on those funds and how they will be used, contact your state education agency which can be found [here](#).

## SUPPORT FOR EXISTING PROGRAMS SERVING GRANDFAMILIES

### Child Welfare

**Child Welfare Services**, part of Title IV-B, that funds child maltreatment prevention, family preservation, permanency and workforce training received an additional \$45 million to address the child welfare needs of families and support to keep families together. This is about a 15 percent increase above the 2020 funding level. It is an important step, but is not adequate to address the increased needs in communities, nor does it directly address existing barriers for grandfamilies. To contact your state, tribal or territory child welfare agencies to better understand how funding will be provided to communities, go [here](#) for their contact information.

### Education

**Education Stabilization Fund** received \$30.8 billion for students due to school closure from COVID-19. Ninety percent of the \$13.5 billion will be granted to local education agencies from state agencies, based on federal Title I funding levels received last year. The local K-12 funds can be used to purchase technology to support online learning; mental health supports; and afterschool and summer school programs. The law specifically includes outreach and activities to meet the unique needs of low-income students, children with disabilities, English learners, racial and ethnic minorities, students experiencing homelessness, and foster care youth. To

learn more about how those funds will be used in your community, contact your local school board, [school superintendent](#) or other local education authority.

**Head Start** received \$750 million additional funding available to support existing Head Start sites for the cost of continuing to provide services to eligible children during this public health crisis. The majority of funding, \$500 million, will be provided through non-competitive grants for supplemental summer programs to fill the gaps from lost learning time. To learn more about how that funding will be distributed in your community, contact your state Head Start Collaboration Office - you can find their contact information [here](#). To locate a Head Start program in your community you can find more information [here](#).

## Health & Nutrition

**Coverage of COVID-19 Testing at No Cost** The CARES Act extended provisions from the earlier Families First Act Coronavirus Response Act (Families First Act) to expand access to diagnostic testing and preventive services (including any forthcoming vaccines) at no cost to individuals covered by private health insurance. Medicare is also required to cover testing and at such time as a vaccine may be available, a vaccine, at no-cost. The Families First Act provides no-cost testing to individuals covered by Medicaid and CHIP and provides states the option of Medicaid coverage for testing (not treatment) for specified uninsured individuals. To enroll in Medicaid or CHIP you can access more information [here](#) or to learn more about how to get free testing you can call or email the contact information on your insurance card.

**Emergency Food Assistance Program** provides no cost supplemental food assistance for low-income individuals, including elderly individuals. This includes

- \$450 million for the purchase of additional food and commodities
- \$150 million may be distributed to community partners for emergency food assistance

Such entities may include food banks, food pantries, or soup kitchens that serve the public. To learn more about how the funds will be distributed, you can contact your state Food and Nutrition Service agency that you can find [here](#).

**Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)** received an increase of:

- \$15 billion to cover the expected increases in participation in the program during this public health emergency;
- \$100 million for food distribution on Indian reservations; and
- \$200 million for grants to US territories for nutrition assistance.

Although program participation is expected to increase due to loss of income and employment, eligibility for the program has gone unchanged. To contact your state or territorial SNAP agency, you can find a listing [here](#) or Tribal Organizations can locate their Food and Nutrition Services Regional Offices [here](#).

**Telehealth from FQHC and Rural Health Clinics** The new law allows Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) and Rural Health Clinics (RHC) to provide Medicare beneficiaries care

in their home or other setting via telehealth during the public health emergency. This allows Medicare beneficiaries to obtain access to health care professionals without having to leave their home for protection against the coronavirus and/or for those individuals living in counties with shortages of healthcare professionals. You can learn more about how to access telehealth services by contacting your local FQHC by going [here](#).

## Housing Assistance

**Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)** provides local communities and states (see Native American Housing for tribal funding) with an additional \$5 billion to support services for senior citizens, the homeless and other public health programs. That includes:

- \$2 billion to supplement state and local governments that currently receive grants
- \$1 billion to go directly to state agencies
- \$2 billion through formula (to be determined) grants based on coronavirus factors

To learn more about CDBG in your state you can view grantee contacts [here](#) or to see funding that will be going to your community you can view the spreadsheet [here](#).

**Emergency Solutions Grants** received \$4 billion for state and local governments to address the homeless or those at risk of homelessness (*this bill clarifies anyone with income below 50 percent of area median income is considered at risk*). Funding will be released in two phases, the first using the existing granting formula and the second is currently under development by HUD based on coronavirus factors. Current grantees can be found on the HUD Exchange website (same as CDBG) [here](#) or allocations can also be found [here](#).

**Emergency Food and Shelter Program** received \$200 million for services, shelter and food provided through community organizations. This public-private partnership is governed by a Board representing the American Red Cross; Catholic Charities, USA; The Jewish Federations of North America; National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA; The Salvation Army; United Way Worldwide; and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The national Board encourages local boards to prioritize assistance to the elderly, families with children, Native Americans and Veterans. To identify your local recipient organization you can search the National Board's website [here](#).

**Housing for the Elderly** allows for \$50 million to remain available until September 30, 2023 to provide affordable housing for seniors and ensure housing providers take steps to prevent, prepare and respond to COVID-19. In addition, \$10 million was also designated for service coordinators and existing congregate services for residents of assisted housing projects.

**Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)** received an additional \$900 million for states to support home energy assistance for low-income households. To learn more about how to apply in your community, contact the National Energy Assistance Referral (NEAR) Project 1-866-674-6327 and/or email: [energy@ncat.org](mailto:energy@ncat.org). Your local [Low-Income Energy Office](#) would also be able to help.

**Native American Housing** received \$300 million for Native American Housing Assistance and Self Determination Act Block Grant to assist Tribally Designated Housing Entities (TDHE). That funding includes \$200 millions for the Indian Community Block Grant program. Funding is designated to support tribal communities with their COVID-19 response. Funding allocations can be viewed in this [chart](#) or to contact a TDHE you can search the national directory [here](#).

### **Older Americans Act**

**Administration for Community Living** received an additional \$955 million for existing aging and disability network grantees. This includes \$820 million for activities that fall under the Older Americans Act including:

- \$100 million for the National Family Caregiver Support Program which provides support services for family caregivers including grandparents and other older caregivers raising children
- \$480 million for nutrition services
- \$200 million for supportive services
- \$20 million for nutrition services
- \$20 million for elder rights protection activities, including the long-term ombudsman program

**Aging and Disability Resource Centers** received \$50 million for grants to states and territories. Grant applications are due by April 15, 2020. For more information the Administration for Community Living has posted a [fact sheet](#) with details. In addition, \$85 million was also directed to centers for independent living. To learn more or to find services you can find a local provider through the [Eldercare Locator](#).

### **Income and Employment Stabilization**

**Community Services Block Grant (CSBG)** received \$1 billion supplemental funding to support communities in addressing unemployment and economic disruption due to COVID-19. State agencies are required to pass through 90% of their allocation to local CSBG Eligible Entities. States may retain 5% of the funding for administrative functions and the remaining funding is available for discretionary projects that support the mission of CSBG. The supplemental funding also allows for an expansion of eligibility from 125% of the federal poverty level (FPL) to individuals up to 200% of the FPL. Funds are available through September 30,2020. To learn who to contact in your community go to this [website](#).

**Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)** is extended and will not expire until November 30,2020 (instead of May 22, 2020). This allows state, territory or tribal agencies to continue to provide needed assistance to families. However the law falls short of expanding the program as the demands grow among families that experience loss of jobs and wages. Past economic stimulus legislation, such as the one during the Great Recession, provided states,

territories and tribes additional funding to expand the cash payments to families to cover the cost of basic needs.

Although no new money is available for TANF, TANF programs around the country have a great deal of flexibility to improve access to its much-needed grants and short-term benefits. States, tribes and territories determine their grant dollar amounts, work and time limit exemptions, provision of short-term benefits, and other policies and practices that impact access. To learn more about grandfamilies and TANF where you live (and it may have a different name), Generations United has a resource [here](#). To explore how your TANF program can improve access for grandfamilies, see this resource [here](#). To identify your state, territory or tribal contact you can start [here](#).

## SUPPORT FOR NONPROFITS SERVING GRANDFAMILIES

**Paid Sick & Family Leave for Nonprofit Employees** The Act lowers the cost to employers for paid sick and family leave to the amounts covered by a refundable payroll tax credit initially passed in the [Families First Coronavirus Response Act](#). For more details on the implications on your organization you can view more details at the Council of Nonprofits [here](#).

**Small Business Administration Forgivable Loans for Nonprofits** (*with less than 500 employees*) Eligible nonprofits can apply for special emergency loans to cover payroll, operations, debt services, etc. The loans' maximum 4% interest rate is intended to create incentives for employers to hire back as many of their employees as possible. Nonprofits are not eligible to participate in this program if they are currently participating in the Economic Injury Disaster Loans (EIDL) which also received additional funding through the CARES Act. For more details and help applying, visit [here](#).

**Unemployment Insurance** Unemployment benefits will increase by an additional \$600 per week for laid off workers through July 31, 2020. For nonprofits, the cost of unemployment compensation for laid off workers will be lowered from 100% to 50% with the federal government covering the remaining 50%. For more details on the implications on your organization you can view more details at the Council of Nonprofits [here](#).

## NEXT STEPS

While the long term implications for grandfamilies resulting from this unprecedented public health crisis remain unclear, Congress has sought short term funding for existing systems and programs in order to quickly infuse communities, businesses and families to help stabilize the economy. The above list addresses key provisions in the law with potential implications for grandfamilies, however, the CARES Act does not directly address many of the most pressing obstacles grandfamilies continue to face. Therefore, advocacy for additional funding and supportive policies continues as Congress looks to address remaining issues holding back the

country from a health and economic recovery. Generations United and our partners are seeking support for further investments to address the following needs of grandfamilies.

- **Food and Supplies:** Access to food, medicine and basic supplies with minimal risk for exposure outside their home.
- **Information:** Accurate information from people grandfamilies trust to gain access to support services for themselves and children without putting the household at risk of exposure to illness.
- **Technology/Virtual Support:** Internet and technology access for tele-health services, children's distance learning, and to reduce social isolation. Before the pandemic, caregivers often found critical help through formal and informal support groups to cope with stress and gain information.
- **Financial Assistance:** Many caregivers have lost or reduced employment in addition to losing retirement savings due to the instability in the stock market. Grandfamily caregivers also often use retirement savings to support children. With both on the decline, additional financial assistance is needed to maintain basic household necessities.
- **Alternative Care Plans:** Emergency plans are necessary in the event a caregiver dies or becomes too ill to care for the children. Children often come into their grandfamily caregivers' homes unexpectedly, and caregivers may not have had the opportunity to adequately plan for who will raise the children if they no longer can.
- **Kinship Navigator Programs:** These programs are trusted sources of information and referral for grandfamily caregivers to connect to critical services. These programs identify families in need and coordinate with other community-based programs to help families get the supplies and support they need. During this unprecedented time, the demand for these services is skyrocketing.

To address these critical needs, Generations United urges increased federal investments in kinship navigator programs, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) for grandfamilies, child abuse prevention, child welfare system supports and the Social Services Block Grant as part of Congress' response to the COVID-19 pandemic. **For updates on advocacy efforts, sign up for alerts at [www.gu.org/get-involved/](http://www.gu.org/get-involved/). For more resources for grandfamilies impacted by the pandemic, visit Generations United's at [www.gu.org/covid-19/](http://www.gu.org/covid-19/)**

Please do not hesitate to contact Generations United with any questions: Jaia Lent at [jlent@gu.org](mailto:jlent@gu.org) or 202-777-0115; Ana Beltran, [abeltran@gu.org](mailto:abeltran@gu.org) or 425-659-3500; and Diane Roznowski at [droznowski@gu.org](mailto:droznowski@gu.org) or 202-777-0118.

### **Additional Resources**

[Alliance for Strong Families and Communities](#)

[National Conference of State Legislatures](#)

[www.childwelfarecovid.org](http://www.childwelfarecovid.org)