

CARES Act Funding to Support Head Start Programs, Children, and Families

Dr. Deborah Bergeron: Good afternoon everybody. This is Dr. Bergeron here, and I really appreciate you taking the time to join us this afternoon. Webinars are not unusual for the Office of Head Start; however, we are usually convened together in the Switzer building, working together with eye contact and all kinds of stuff that help things flow smoothly.

We are, instead, each sitting in our own respective telework locations, which probably looks something like a kitchen. And I'm going to try to pull this off so that we can give you information you need in a timely manner, and in a way that makes sense to you and give you an opportunity to ask questions, as well. And—and we want to be kind of brief in our presentation.

So, there are times for questions for you. And I want you to know, it's interesting when—when we were getting ready for this particular webinar, and we've been doing a lot of webinars, I said that this is my audience, these are the grantees. These are the people I miss the most, that I haven't been able to see at conferences that I haven't—I haven't even done a vlog in over a month because this has all been so fast moving. Everything just feels a little discombobulated, which is probably how you all feel.

But I have started all of my webinars with a quote from the entrepreneur, Richard Branson, founder of Virgin Airlines, and he says, "If you don't know how to do something and you're asked to do it, just say yes and figure out how to do it later." That's kind of what we're doing here as this case moves very quickly, and we are faced with a challenge to which we, of course will say yes, and rise to the occasion. And we will figure out how to do it as we go through it. And I have full faith that all of you possess the skill and the drive and the passion to get this work done.

So, without further ado, I'm going to start off and give you some background information about the Cares Act, and the funding specific to Head Start, as I'm sure you're very interested in getting more information about this. I want you to know that there is a little bit of history here, and that is that as we were asked about what dollars, where—where we would spend dollars if we were given the opportunity to have a say. We spent a lot of time talking about this and what—what stood out the most to our team was the fact that all of our children are missing so much valuable time in their program.

And ... The idea that if we have the opportunity to bring them back before they step into a kindergarten classroom, we think this would be really important to do. Part of the team that was in that conversation is on this call today. We have Colleen Rathgeb, Belinda Rinker, and Heather Wanderski who are going to be presenting later. Heather is our new director of program operations. So, welcome to that position, Heather, but she comes to us from Region V, so lots of experience both from the ground, and now at a national level. And then, Ann Linehan is on, and she's going to be doing some question, kind of reviewing your questions and clumping them together so I can get to as many, as well.

We can get to as many as possible. You've got a lot of good people on the phone here that can address for you. So, as this team got together and talked, as I said, the—the rising kindergartners were most concerned that they are prepared for kindergarten. So in return, we received \$750 million, up to \$500 million available for programs to operate supplemental summer programs and then \$250—or the \$250 plus the remaining of the \$500 million that doesn't get spent if that's the case, for one-time activities responding to the coronavirus. And so that's—that's going to look different depending on the program. Both availabilities to be awarded on a non-competitive basis. So, this is open to everybody who's out there. And in terms of the—of the 500 million, those would be Head Start programs that currently serve rising kindergartners that do not operate in summer.

So, and program—programs that are closed, to prevent this in their community—communities, we understand that you are doing your best to reach those children and families. We've seen some really creative things going on, but we also know if those kiddos aren't in your classrooms, they're losing a lot of what they were gaining as—as programs began to close, and they are spending time at home. Certainly, many of them working on things, but there's a big difference between the structure of a school day, than being at home doing work, sort of as it makes sense in a family environment. We also know that we want to make sure that we offset these losses and that our children are as prepared that first day of kindergarten as possible. We kind of reminisced a little bit, you know, and it's, as we talked about this, it's Head Start's 55th anniversary, and if we go back to its founding, it was really founded on this principle of summer programming to prevent, I mean, to prepare for that first day of kindergarten. So, we're looking forward to kind of going back to basics on this.

Programs within this, supplement ... They can provide social-emotional support for daily routines, supporting children and getting up-to-date on medical and dental. We know a lot of that is completely on hold, connecting children and families to receiving schools. I really think it's a great opportunity to reach out to your school system. They are going to be overburdened with making up for lost time. And if they know they have a partner in the community that can help with a group of kiddos to do that, and you align your work so that everybody's on the same page day one, I think that makes a lot of sense. We definitely want to help our parents get back to work and work on those transition activities that all got put on hold. And then there's the very big piece of mental health, parenting, stable housing, all of the comprehensive services that we typically are so engaged in.

And we know that folks are still continuing to do as much of that as they can, but we know that there's also only so much you can do remotely. So, getting back in touch with—with that kind of thing. The program and staff will receive an income and benefits just as if they were employed. The work with children and families, before they transition to kindergarten. And we want them to make sure they access professional development opportunities, as well. And you know, we were talking a lot about what this programming might look like. I just think it should look a lot like what school would be looking like if they were in school now, if they were in Head Start now and there isn't a need to create a whole new program just because it's summertime. You might want to do some things that are unique to summer, but don't feel as if you have to create a particularly unique summer program.

I think taking what you would've done in March, April, and part of May, and laying that into July and August makes a lot of sense. You might want to update your Memorandas of Understanding with receiving schools, and I've already alerted the major associations that this money is out there and, that we expect there to be a lot of cooperative and collaborative work going on during this transition.

Now, I do know I'm going to preempt a question because many, many folks are probably thinking, "Well, what if we're not open?" And certainly, that's possible. We're going to go forward as if we expect to be able to provide services at some point during the summer. So, just take all of this information in under that auspices. And also, with the idea of the quote that I shared with you in the beginning, and that is, you know, just move forward, full steam ahead, act as if ... And we will figure this out as we move through it. We don't have time to waste, because summer is around the corner and if we get the OK to open our doors, we want to be poised and ready to move forward. I'm going to pass the mouse virtually over to Colleen, who is going to continue and give you some—some deeper information into this opportunity.

Colleen Rathgeb: Hi everybody. So happy to be able to get a chance to talk with you today. As Debbie said, and actually one of the first questions that came into the webcast as we started was the question about, "Yeah, I'm under—our state is in shelter in place. I don't know if I'm going to be able to operate a summer program this summer. Should I still apply?" And we absolutely understand that this is a fluid situation. As we started in the beginning, we are asking folks to say "yes" and figure it out with us.

So, we understand that programs do not know if they will be able to be operational this summer. We know it may be quite a while until we do know that. We were not asking folks to predict whether or not they're going to be able to do that, in deciding about operating the summer program. We want you to think about this opportunity with the belief that you would be able to be operational in your regular—your regular buildings at the way you would normally have been operating right now.

That said, if that changes after we've made some funding decisions as we go on in the planning, we will revisit that. But what we want folks to do is to plan the summer program that they would operate if their centers could be opened, given all of the public health concerns. Obviously, we—it is paramount that we will not want anyone to be operating unless that is absolutely safe and able to do that in the best interest of kids and families. But for now, for planning purposes, we want you guys all to operate as if you would be able to do that. So, you can tell us the summer program that you would do, if you could do the best thing you think is possible for your kids and families.

So, Debbie started talking about how the priority for the summer program is for our Head Start kids that will be entering kindergarten this fall. So, we are very concerned that kids from programs that have been closed for March, you could be five even, you know, probably even six months of a lapse between kids being in a Head Start program until they were to walk into kindergarten. We are really hopeful that the opportunity of this summer money and hopefully, things going right so that folks are able to operate the summer will give those kids a great opportunity to have that Head Start, more of that Head Start experience, and have it really close to the time they get into kindergarten.

So, that is a huge priority for this program. We also are really concerned about the potential for disproportionate losses for our kids, either entering kindergarten or our younger Head Starts kids that have IEPs. And so, we really also want to ensure that all of those children are able to have a summer experience again to offset the loss of the Head Start that they're having now that also is compounded by the loss of the additional services that the children receive connected to that Head Start experience.

So, we believe that with the funding, with the \$500 million that we have been awarded, that we would be able to offer summer programming to every rising kindergartner and child with an IEP currently in Head Start. So that would be, we think, the best-case scenario, that every single one of those kids across the country could get this summer program. We know that that may not be possible. That even in the best scenario where everything was free, clear to open the summer that there are probably programs that would not be able to, given facilities or staffing concerns, or the family preferences, may not be up to operate in the summer. And so, if there is funding beyond what we can—funding beyond what we need to serve the children that are going into kindergarten and have IEPs, we also may be able to have programs proposed serving other younger kids in Head Start. So, other children that you particularly think could benefit from the summer program.

Do ... We got a question. And we've gotten this, as we've talked to many times, this is a Head Start summer program.

So, Early Head Start programs are not eligible for this funding. We again ... Folks know Early Head Start is supposed to be a continuous program. Folks are funded across the board for longer than most Head Start programs are funded for. And so we expect, unlike Head Start, Early Head Start programs will be able to start up operations over the summer once they get the ability to get back into those facilities. Unlike most Head Start programs and those certainly that we're targeting here that do not operate over the summer.

So, as the eligible grantees just was mentioning, this is Head Start only and what we are looking is for any program that has the capacity to deliver the high-quality summer programs, provided that they are ready, are not funded to provide services over the summer.

So, that means if a program is funded to operate maybe one of their centers out of 10 operates fully across the summer, that program could apply to offer summer services in their other nine or the other centers for, again, they're the priority on the rising kindergarteners and kids with IEPs. But if a program already is funded to serve all of their Head Start children over the summer, even if it is not for the—a full day, but if they are already providing a summer program that they have developed based on the needs of the community, they are not eligible for this funding. So again, this is only to serve kids that otherwise would not be being served over the summer.

Ann Linehan: So Colleen, could you talk a little bit about a couple of issues? One of the questions is, "You know, gee, we used our duration funds for summer program. Could we extend that?" So, there were other questions about, "What about we have a summer program, could we just extend the existing hours? And what about the length of time?"

Colleen: Sure. So if a program is, got ... Received duration funding and they're now operating a full school year. So, they extended to operate the 1,020 hours, the—that program could still add additional hours to actually go through the summer with this funding for this year. Again, just note, this is only for one year. This is one-time funding for the summer program. If they were serving the—the children in Head Start across the—all the way through the summer, so that they were operating, you know, June, July, and August, they would not be eligible. But if, say, their duration funding ran, had their program run a little bit longer so that they were running through June, but they were closed for July and most of August until kindergarten started up, they could absolutely apply for the funding for that time, the, you know, the July and the August when they weren't operating.

But if a program is funded to do a summer program, and it—it's already across all the summers—the, you know, all the summer months, but that they only, they say operate four hours a day, this funding wouldn't be for them to operate a six-hour day because we would be able to ... Once they have the all clear to open, they would be serving those kids for that four hours.

So, we want to make sure that we get every child in over the summer that isn't otherwise—would otherwise not be in, in the summer at all. But programs also don't have to, we're not dictating whether the summer program you would run would be three-and-a-half hours a day, six hours a day. We want programs to look at what they think is the best summer model for them and to come in and to apply for that.

Ann: We only want to talk to ... We talked about children with IEPs being in addition to the rising kindergarten is another priority. If there are Early Head Start children that are aging out who are on IFSPs or the IEPs have been in development or transitioning would like, would—would be transitioning in the fall. What about including them in the proposal? So, these are kids aging out on IEPs, or IFSPs at this point, but transitioning in with, you know, with diagnosed special needs.

Colleen: So, the way we are looking right now at what the funding can support, it is just looking at your—the Head Start slots. And so, we're going to be basing the available funding on what we can provide without expanding the slots that folks already are funded for in Head Start. However, if a program was funded, for ... If X number of slots is based on the ... A portion of the Head Start slots that they are funded for over the year, and there was a child that was now age-eligible for Head Start over the summer and they didn't—they had an empty slot in the classroom, they could absolutely include that child in the programming.

What we were asking programs to do is when they think about the number of children, they—a number of slots they want to request for their summer programming—it can't be more than the slots that they're already funded for. And again, with the priority being on the rising kindergartners is kids with IEPs, we would expect the number to be in the priority groups to be lower than their full enrollment.

Heather's going to talk in a minute about, on what we're going to ask people to fill out in an "Intent to Apply," what we're going to ask people to tell us about what they would like to do in the summer, based on that priority grouping of kids and then younger children in Early Head

Start. And that will give us a better sense of how far the money would spread and so, exactly what programs may be able to do. But we want right now, at least when you're thinking about the programs, thinking just about the kids that, or at least the slot that are currently in your Head Start program.

And one thing I did want to make sure people know is that this isn't just for center-based programs. So, if programs normally operate a home-based option for their preschoolers, they could apply to have that home-based program operate over the summer when it normally would—if it did normally would not have.

So, right now we are not looking at using this funding to extend the virtual connections and programming that you're doing right now with families. We are looking at starting back up the regular models that programs are operating. So in most cases for preschool, that is center-based programming. Obviously, some family child care or, child care center-based programming, or it can be home-based. But again, if that's what you're normally operating during the year, as opposed to creating a different option for the summer. Ann, are there other questions, do you think, relate to this before I turn it over to Heather to start talking about the operational issues, about the "Intent to Apply" in the application?

Ann: Well, the only thing that maybe you or Dr. B may want to comment on, there was one question, I know this was raised also earlier, you know, what if school systems are starting summer programs or it's, you know, are we looking to encourage collaboration, or requiring any kind of collaboration? You know, there—there might be some school districts that are planning their own supplemental summer programs. I mean it's, and if Head Starts want to apply to do ... Could Head Starts use the summer funds to apply for supplemental services. And I think you've already answered that. This is really for the Head Start population, but anything about collaborations with public schools.

Colleen: OK. So if Debbie wants to jump in too, I think just the idea that ...

Dr. Bergeron: Oh sorry, I was on mute. I got it. Sorry. Yeah, I think you definitely want to jump on this as an opportunity to collaborate with the school system. It's a great way to open the door if you haven't already, and if you have, I think it's just natural. Like I said, I really expect the school systems to be pretty heavily burdened with a lot of making up time, not just for their pre-K kiddos, but for, you know, their entire population.

So, any relief I think would be welcome and I think it will be more effective if it's aligned. I also would say just, I was going through the questions and I think I can address a lot of them in one big message. And that is—that this is a true opportunity for Head Start—because this is funding for programming that has fewer sort of strict guidelines attached to it. So, you have the opportunity to do this summer program for rising kindergartners to help them be more prepared for their first day in kindergarten.

We aren't taking this as taking advantage of this to send out class observers or—or to do a monitoring review or any of that. It's not that we don't expect high quality, but I just want you to feel like you can be innovative here. So, all of those questions around, "We do full day now. Can we do half day?" The answer is probably going to be "yes." Whatever those little variances that you want to do to accommodate it being summer make sense. And that would also

address the things that—that Colleen was talking about. "Can I do this if I'm a home base visitor?"

Of course. Anybody who's—any of those kiddos who are going to sit in a kindergarten classroom in the fall, if we can get them support over the summer, they're going to be better off. So, I hope you will see this as a really exciting opportunity and try to take like blinders off that might limit your creativity and try to think outside the box a little bit about what you can do with this kind of unprecedented opportunity.

Ann: But I think, Colleen, I think you both mentioned, this is not, we're not talking about monies for remote services or online services. We're talking about physically engaging with the children and parents, live in-person.

Colleen: That's right. That is right. And I think—exactly thinking like Debbie said, it could be flexible what—what exactly you're operating. It may not have to be the same hours, exactly—exactly the same way you do summers, the non ... You do your regular school year services, but the expectation is it is kind of back to a fully intense, Head Start model, but with the caveat of, like Debbie said, this is not, you know, we're not going to be looking and saying you operated for six more weeks this summer, so we want to make sure you have another assessment point with your child outcome data, or we're going to be counting those days when you think about whether kids have gotten, you know, followed up on their dental screenings, we understand that everything in communities are—are really, in a different place right now than they normally are. And what the goal really is is to get those kids back into that fully-engaged Head Start experience before they go on to kindergarten.

And—and so we want people to see it, like Debbie said, as a great opportunity. And so with that great opportunity, I'm going to turn it over to Heather to talk about the first steps that you need to be taking very quickly to start being able to capitalize and make this opportunity real in your program.

Heather: Thanks, Colleen. So, in order to ensure that there are sufficient funds for all interested programs that are wanting to provide summer programming, we need grantees to submit an "Intent to Apply" form within the Head Start enterprise system. That opportunity, or that "intent," is now available as of today. And we're asking for a relatively quick turnaround on those "intents" to be submitted by April 13. And it's not an extensive request. There are very few questions, just to run through what they look like. It's whether or not you intend to apply. So it's a very, yes/no question.

And then if you are ... How many children you anticipate serving and of that figure, how many are in the top priority? So, those children that are planning to enter—to enter kindergarten for the upcoming program year, as well as preschoolers, and IEPs. So again, that—that would be just a subset of those that you are interested in providing services for summer programming. And then the last and final question is how many weeks of service you are planning to offer? So that will be an open-ended plugin. So there'll be a set number of weeks in the "intent." But if you are thinking about providing a different number of weeks of service. You can fill in the exact amount that you're looking for.

The "intent" is, as you can see here, it's going to be end of the financials tab and HSES. And please note that that "intent" is not your application for supplemental funds. The application itself will come separate, but again, the "intent," we really want—even if you're on the fence about thinking about wanting to apply—if you are even remotely interested, we are recommending that you submit an "Intend to Apply" because this will really help us gauge interest and estimate the amount of incoming requests and the funding available to serve the anticipated number of children. So ...

Ann: Then Heather, would you also say that people, you know, have gotten a couple of questions, and again, people are afraid like, "Gee, what if—what if we're still sheltering in place?" We want to give people confidence to submit their "intent" as if we would be—have the opportunities to be open.

Heather: That's absolutely right. You know, I think based on what you are, you know, regardless of where you're at now with services, I think we should be anticipating that, you know, full operations in summer and that you should be thinking about that as a possibility for your programming and that you would be back in full operation. So, based on the analysis of the "intents" that are submitted to our office, you know, depending on the response, we may be able to support the top priority, or maybe all of the requests, but we're not going to be able to know that until we get those "intents" in.

And then after those are submitted, we'll be able to analyze that information. And in approximately mid-April, we do anticipate having what we call a summer program supplement available in HSES for programs to actually apply for the funding. And again, application for these funds is completely voluntary. We would expect that we'll be able to review and award on a rolling basis. So, once we're able to communicate out, if we can support all or a portion of the number of children that are anticipated to be served, we can start reviewing and processing those applications as quickly as possible.

We do anticipate issuing a Program Instruction that will—that the timing will be available at the same time that summer program supplement will be available in HSES and that summer, or that Program Instruction will detail the streamlined application process. So, we are looking to pare down what you would normally submit for a supplemental application, specifically the program schedule. We would only be reflecting the children to be served and their time that you would anticipate them spending in that summer program. For the budget, we're only asking programs to submit an SF-424A by object class category. A budget summary would not be needed.

We are entertaining non-federal match waivers, and there is no need to submit anything for approval other than to enter \$0 on the 424 and 424A. So, a separate narrative justification, as well as separate, governing body approvals for that non-federal match waiver, are not needed. The narrative should be brief. We're anticipating no more than 10 pages. And that you would be able to describe how the proposed children you want to serve meet the priority, as well as a budget narrative that would be thinking about, by object class category, what you would take to operate, including increased costs.

You know, thinking about recruiting staff and children, and then anything like mental health or health needs that would be increased as a result of providing services over the summertime.

And then finally, I think the—one of the things that has been weighing heavily on programs minds is around securing board and Policy Council approvals of these applications. So, what we're asking for is, it just ... For the grantees to submit a statement that board and Policy Council members who are available for contact have given approval of the application. So, we are definitely, you know, loosening up some of what would be required. I know we typically require signed statements from the board and the Council chairs, as well as meeting minutes, but in this case, we're only asking you to submit a statement that the board and Policy Council members that were available for contact have given approval of the application. How many ...

Ann: Can you talk ... Can you make sure you include the ... whether or not grantees who are in DRS can apply?

Heather: Absolutely. So, that was on next on my list. And yes, everyone who is currently operating programming, including those in DRS, are eligible to apply, and applications are due by May 15. And we do anticipate, again, that based on the funding requests and the "intents," that we'll be able to fund all of those requests that come in before that date. And then if funds are still available, we may continue to accept an award application through June 15. So Ann— Ann did we have any other questions that came in around ...

Ann: I don't think so. My other call is on the line, if you're catching these questions, too. Again, I think people are still

concerned: "Is this mandatory? Is it voluntary?" This is totally, totally, totally, the choice of the grantee.

Colleen: And also, in terms of structure. "How long does it have to be?" All of that.

Heather: Very flexible. As I was saying, this is like really open territory for you, so look at it that way and try to think with an open mind about it and stay away from thinking too narrowly, I think. OK. Then, I'm going to turn it over, I think, then to Colleen.

Colleen: Great. So, the—the other portion of the Cares funding is around \$250 million and again, that depends on the number of programs that decide they are able to operate the summer programs. So, at least the \$250 million will be available for a wide range of needs that programs have for one-time expenses that are related to the coronavirus. So, this funding will go out to all Head Start programs, Early Head Start, Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships. It's going to go out with a formula that is going to—is just based on grantees enrollment. It will go out to all of the programs and they will be able to use the funds.

The language in the lot is for activities to prevent, prepare for, or respond to the coronavirus. So we again, we think that this is going to vary a great deal depending on program's needs and their situations. We are allowing grantees flexibility to determine what are the one-time needs for their program. These are just list—a list of some of the activities that it might include. But broadly, we want programs just to be able to think about whether a one-time activity is related to coronavirus, and is it something, obviously that is also an allowable use of Head Start funds. So this ... They could be mental health services, support interventions, a particular crisis related to the current situation that programs and families are in. It could be when programs resume. So again, this is a broadly related to the response to the current crisis funds.

These funds will be—Heather's going to talk a little bit of more about how these funds are going to come—but these funds are going to go out to grantees and they will be available through, at least ... Programs will have the availability to spend them at least through the program year, and beyond that, in—into the next year if there's carryover, for those funds. So again, it could be ...

Ann: Colleen?

Colleen: ... or activities going into the resumption. Yes Ann?

Ann: Colleen, could you make the distinction between, for example, we've gotten the question about the air conditioner and a couple of calls actually, and what it is grantees need. How do they distinguish between what they need for the summer program if they're applying for the summer programs and how the things necessary to operate the summer programs could be in that application versus the application you're talking about now for the COVID-quality funds could be used for things not necessarily related to the summer program?

Colleen: So, I think the—the funds here, this 250 that we're talking about will be for activities that, programs that are not able to do the summer program or that they can be any other ongoing costs. If there is something like an air conditioning is not something that a program would believe they needed, except for, you know, operating that, you know, maybe six weeks of the summer that they need that. You know, on a case-by-case basis, we may give, you know, talk programs through exactly where to include that. But I think people should err on including that as part of your application for the summer program.

So if there is, you know, something that is directly related to, "I need this just because I am planning on operating, or I need this in order to be able to operate my summer program," I think you could solidly include that in the application around the summer program. These—these activities with this 250 is broader for broad activities that are related to the coronavirus. So, it could be things like programs ... The cost of meals either have not been reimbursed by USDA or they've been more expensive. And so, you've been using more of your Head Start funds, or you'd need, you know, would be in the future, continuing to use more program funds you could use this for. It could be around training and professional development for staff on effective disease management in the short term or, you know, broadly to prepare for other public health crises. It could be about cleaning or the supplies. Someone asked a question I saw about PPEs.

So, you know, the equipment that you need to be able to, again, operate in the current order, prepare for a similar public health crisis. We've had a lot of programs that have asked about technology and could they, you know, purchase tablets maybe to lend to families or to staff to aid their current virtual work with programs. That's absolutely something that folks could use this funding for. So again, flexible, but also, again, just keeping the idea and to make that link of why is this connected to COVID, and something that makes sense from the Head Start lens for people to be working on.

And so again, this \$250 million is not related to the summer program; this is for all programs to be able to deal with the issues that are going on in their program or when they resume their

programs related to the coronavirus, whether or not they are going to operate a summer program.

Ann: And I think, Colleen, also there, because we also got 250 for permanent quality improvement. I mean, these are ... These COVID \$250 million are really for one-time activities, things that are going to help them, you know, restore, resume. And it's also possible that a program may use this more if they have more need in their Early Head Start or Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships, that we would want them ... They have the flexibility to use this COVID-quality money where they need it.

Colleen: Absolutely. Whatever program options ... Whatever budget lines, wherever the need is, and this is like Ann said, this is completely separate than the quality funding, which I know folks are in the midst of thinking about applications for ongoing quality improvement needs with that funding that would be part of things you do year after year as opposed to this \$250 million is just related to the COVID and is one-time funding.

Ann: And so, the 500 that was set aside for the summer program is a very distinct pot and the activities related to the summer program, the materials and supplies should be part of that 500 in there when folks think about applying for this summer program.

Colleen: That's right. And with that, should I turn it to Heather to talk a little bit about that, the application process for this one-time COVID funding, formula funding.

Heather Wanderski: Sure. So, this application process for the COVID funding that we call it, for lack of a better term, "formula funding," because it's going to every organization, or every grantee out there is going to be eligible for this funding because it's based on your total federal funded enrollment. So, it's similar to how we were able to determine each grantee's, proportionate amount for their quality funding. That's how we're determining how much you will be able to receive for the COVID funding.

And to simplify the application process, we're going to be having every grantee add this COVID funding to their existing cost of living and quality improvement applications that are coming in. What we're asking is that you continue on the same trajectory that you all are working toward and that due date of May 15, and that you submit those existing COLA and quality applications on that due date as originally planned. And then once we have those applications in-house, we will then be working to communicate out to you how much you are eligible for the COVID funding and then return the applications to you to enter that information, specifically, on the 424 and 424A.

We are not asking for any additional governing body approvals, we're not asking for any specific budget narrative associated with that funding. We are only asking for you to enter that funding directly on the 424 and 424A. And then once that gets returned back to our office, we're going to be able to work on award. And specifically, because we are awarding the funding under a separate accounting number that we will be able to specify in the remarks that the funds are only to be used specifically for ... To prevent, prepare for, and respond to coronavirus. So, I think there's been a couple of questions that have come in specifically around this information. And specifically, if you have not yet received your Fiscal Year 20 funds yet, but you would need to access corona funds prior to the start of your next budget period or those Fiscal Year 20

funds, you should notify your regional office. So, we can look to try to get you that funding available if you are incurring expenses now for funds in the current budget period. So and any—any specific questions on ...

Dr. Bergeron: I think Heather ... This is Dr. Bergeron. I think that in the interest of looking at the time, if we could get through those next steps quickly so that we make sure we get all of the information on the table. We can keep looking at questions, but I'm concerned we're not going to get to them all.

Heather: Yeah. Yeah. So the other I'm hoping is a well-received piece of information that we want to make sure our grantees are aware about. We did send out a notice through HSES on Friday, and that we realize that there are a lack of resources available in the community as a result of programs being hit by this disaster, and that we are willing to entertain waivers for the non-federal match portion of the supplemental funding that is set to come out. So, as best as you are thinking about, or you're in the process of writing the COLA and quality supplemental applications, we are entertaining those non-federal match waiver requests. And similar to what I explained in the summer supplemental application, all we are asking is for \$0 to be entered on the SF-424 and SF-424A, and that will suffice as a request for a waiver.

No additional documentation would be needed in those. But again, this is specific to COLA quality and any of the funds associated with coronavirus. And that would be either the summer funding requests or the formula funding as was just described. And so, if you were needing a waiver specifically to your operations—ongoing operations—or funds you may have already been awarded, then you would need to come in and ask for a budget revision, similar to how you would normally request those waivers. And then taking a look at, in addition to that, the non-federal match waiver flexibility that we are offering, we also communicated out that there will be an extension of enrollment reporting for the month of March. And so, typically those enrollment reports are due to HSES—are due to be submitted by April 7.

We're extending that enrollment reports to now be due on April 15. So, if you can get your enrollment reports in sooner than you know, please go ahead and do so. But we are granting an extension to April 15. And then we are planning on also issuing a question and answer document to provide some general guidance, related to COVID-19 program closures. We recognize and understand that there have been just an overwhelming number of questions that have come up related to how programs should be submitting enrollment reports, and we want to make sure that we give the best guidance, particularly for those grantees that are in the full enrollment initiative and are struggling to figure out how they should be reporting enrollment and what will that mean for their program if they are already experiencing enrollment issues.

So, we do anticipate that being able to come out soon. But if you have any specific questions, you know, certainly you can reach out to your regional office and we can look to get more information out to you quickly. And then I think we're just going to turn it over now to Belinda.

Belinda Rinker: Thanks, Heather. I want to talk a little bit about wages and benefits, and as many of you know, OHS is directed grantees to continue to pay regularly scheduled wages to employees who are unable to report to their regular positions because of center closures. And we just, I saw across my email, the announcement that these flexibilities are now extended

through June 30; they were scheduled to end April 30. So, the primary purpose of these continued payments of wages and benefits is so that staff can work remotely to continue to meet the needs of children and families. And OHS believes that family needs will be unique and varied during this difficult time. And even remote Head Start support will be vitally important. We think that most families will be able to engage in ongoing learning activities with their children, and others will need help accessing emergency food supplies, applying for unemployment benefits, or even dealing with potentially eviction.

It's also important that employees be available to return to work once centers reopen. OHS does not expect that grantees will pay wages and benefits to Head Start employees who would otherwise be on layoff because of the program's regular closure schedule, such as summer furloughs.

However, we do know that if you're proposing a summer program, you may be recalling some of those furloughed employees or hiring additional employees or adding additional staff hours, maybe bringing your bus driver back to work and that you will need to request additional pay for those staff members who would be supporting your summer program in that application. Just be aware that an employee who is shared between Head Start and other programs could only be paid with Head Start funds for the usual share of their wages and benefits unless their Head Start duties, for some reason, have increased. If an employee needs to use sick leave or FMLA because they are not able to work remotely, they should have access to those benefits. Each employee will find themselves in a different situation depending on their own health and personal circumstances, but no Head Start employee should be forced to give up Head Start wages and benefits because of COVID-19 center closures.

OHS is also mindful that closed Head Start centers may already be licensed to provide child care and Head Start staff, or highly skilled, early childhood professionals with completed background checks. Child care is a critical need in many communities just now, especially for medical personnel and other essential workers. So as long as Head Start staff are continuing to meet the needs of Head Start children and families, and are available to return to Head Start work when recalled, they may also ... If they choose to do so on an entirely voluntary basis, work in child care settings. Adjustment of Head Start wages and benefits is not required under these circumstances.

And we've also had several questions about the Small Business Administration loan program that covers payroll and whether programs are required or encouraged to access that program. And to the extent that the Office of Head Start has directed continued payment of wages, Head Start employees shouldn't be in a position to need that sort of support, but certainly if programs feel that for other reasons, they would benefit from participation in that loan program, they should check the SBA website to determine whether they're eligible and whether participation would be beneficial. OK. I'm going to turn it over to Dr. Bergeron.

Dr. Bergeron: OK. So, I think as we kind of close up this conversation, I want to talk just a little bit about this unprecedented time and these challenges that we're facing as the Head Start community, but just as communities in general, and we have really been working hard to think about how Head Start can be that center of community concern and care. It is so often that Head Start is at the center of providing support for communities in a lot of different

circumstances, and we want this to be part of that. We want to be part of that solution here, as well, if we can.

So part of, you know, part of what we talked about early on, way back in early March when we knew things were unraveling was, you know, how can Head Start ... We are uniquely positioned to support communities and what can we do within the guidelines of the rules we have to follow and being safe, of course, to do that. And one of the really big issues that has been heavy in my lap has been this notion of this need for emergency child care. And so initially we had come out with language around, at the very least, we know we have facilities that are equipped for children. If you feel like your facility could be a support to your community, we gave you permission early on to allow that to be used for emergency child care.

We struggled a little bit with what to do about staff, because we are paying staff, but ultimately came out with some pretty clear language about staff being able to work in emergency child care situations if—if they want to or to volunteer. We had somebody email us and say, "We want to volunteer at the food bank. Is that OK?" We certainly don't want you to think because you're continuing to pay your staff that your folks have to be sitting at home idle, if they've already served their families for the day, in order to somehow follow a rule. So, we've got to come together as a nation, and in small communities, in order to make sure we're taking care of each other, and if Head Start can be part of that solution, I would be proud to stand by you all while you do that. Clearly, you need to make sure you're being safe. So, if you decide, "Yeah, we—we have enough staff to open first and emergency child care," the CDC has some fantastic guidance on opening emergency child care.

Be cognizant of those guidelines. They change regularly, so keep in touch with that. But we know the need is great and it's for our health care workers, but it's for a lot of our other community members who are really important and we sometimes forget about them. We've talked about our trash collectors, who, they have families too, and if they don't come to work and all of our trash piles up, we have other issues, safety and health issues that go along with that. So, to keep our communities safe, and strong, and healthy, we want to make sure that we're here for those emergency workers that have families, as well. And with the—with the new child care funding that just came through, we know a lot of states are going to make that funding available to essential workers regardless of their income.

So, that—those resources should be there to support that process. We want to make sure that you're making local decisions. We know this is a community issue. We don't believe that we have the answer, but we hope we can provide enough flexibility so that as Head Start you can do that. Your families, your Head Start children and families need to be number one priority. Hands down, easy decision.

But if you feel you're meeting their needs and you have staff who are willing, and able, or at a facility that we encourage that. Any work outside of the Head Start responsibilities need to be optional. Please do not make anyone feel even like you're encouraging it in the sense that they feel pressure that you're going to hold that over their heads in some way or whatever, or that you're creating even pure pressure around it. We've got a lot of staff who I'm sure don't have the health, the level of health to take that risk.

And that's OK. We don't want anybody to feel like they need to do that. But if you do have people who would like to step up and you have a facility that you'd like to put forward, we think that is fantastic. And we think Head Start could make a real difference here. And I think, just before we end, I think we've got some questions that folks are, that our leadership team here might need to answer. But I just want to leave you with how proud I am to sit in this seat knowing that all of you are out there. It has been nothing short of amazing to see Head Start programs step up very quickly in the wake of this.

I think Head Start was delivering food via bus before I saw a single school system do that. In fact, that was one of the very first questions is, "Can we use our buses to deliver food or hold a drop off of some kind?"

I have seen ... I love Twitter because I can see pictures, and I've seen pictures of teachers online reading to children. I've seen parents reading to children. I've seen teachers driving by houses leaving notes for kids, singing songs online and doing all kinds of things that are really important. And I saw a post from a parent that said something to the effect of, "It's OK if learning isn't as rich as it might be if my child is in school. The fact that you're showing up to remind her that she matters to you makes a huge difference to her and to our family." And I thought that was a really meaningful post.

And I think it's true for all of our children, regardless of if they're in Head Start or even if they're young. I think teenagers need to hear that, too. So, the more outreach you have with your families, the more you can remind them that they are still part of the Head Start community and that they still matter to you, I think the better. We know a lot of our families struggle in a typical environment, but today we know that it's only exacerbated by financial stress, by mental stress, by fear, and we know that you have a lot to offer. And I would also just add to that, just remember your staff are going through the same thing, and so are you. So, make sure you're taking care of each other and you're not forgetting that that's part of the equation, too.

A question came up a couple of times here, that I just want to address really quick about who's eligible for the summer program. Any enrolled Head Start rising kindergartner is eligible. So someone said, "Well, what if I enroll them now? Would they then be enrolled in my program and eligible for the summer program?" And I would say, absolutely that's true. In fact, we've talked on a lot of our webinars at the regional level about how, if you can figure out how to recruit remotely right now.

We know you can't have fares and invite people to gyms and do things like that. But if you can figure out a way to remotely enroll, it's a great time because we know that the eligible population right now is very high. We had an unprecedented—very fast unemployment rate. I'm sure we have an increase in homelessness. And despite the efforts to try to fight this economically, which—which are valiant. Incredible things are happening. I'm sure families have been affected. So, if you can enroll a family during this time and that child is then eligible for your summer program, that's fine and I encourage you to do that.

Ann: And you know what I'm going to come in as a reminder for all programs that if there are vacancies and you have eligible 4-year-old kids that would benefit from that summer program before going to kindergarten, we understand that the formal enrollment process may be

difficult remotely, but one thing that is absolutely critical is that if you enroll a child, you have documentation that that child is eligible. That is really important for programs to have on file.

Dr. Bergeron: Absolutely. And we know that you can't do the full enrollment process until we're back in business. And I think there's a way to do the beginning and then as we get back in business to follow up with collecting the appropriate paperwork and that kind of thing. It's not perfect and it's not clean and nothing really is right now. We want you to be steadfast and— and honest certainly, but we have got to take care of our communities and it's what we do best. So, I'm hoping that you will think of ways to support your community. Are there questions? I'm—I'm ... The number of questions here is almost overwhelming, but are there some other questions, Ann, that rose to the top that you want me to address.

Ann: I mean, I really think we've covered really a vast majority of the questions. Many of them are very, very similar. I think one thing, you know, we're focused now on getting the funds out and it's focused on the summer program. And we're now seeing questions like, "Are you going to be kind of lenient when we start services, or are you going to sort of come back to business as usual and expect everything to be perfect when we resume services?" And you may want to comment on that, Debbie.

Dr. Bergeron: Yeah. I think what you need to definitely take away from this is we understand that this is in no way something that anybody could have predicted. So, we aren't looking to take advantage of this opportunity and come back and look for ways that programs didn't do the right thing. We know this is really, really a difficult time. I would ask, you know, I saw a question about attendance in the summer and attendance now, and obviously we can't hold you accountable for something you can't actually do. So, I would kind of ask that question of yourself, "Can I actually do this? Well, I can't."

So, we're not going to have the ability to do that, nor the desire. I would simply say, when you have to make decisions, if you think you're making a decision that you'll have to explain later, just document it so that you can, and so that you don't rely on your memory to remember why a certain decision was made. I think you can feel confident that, you know, we have tried really to send a message here that we want to support you, and then we want you to support your staff and your families.

Ann: Dr. B, I think there was one other area that I think Colleen wanted to go back and re-emphasize, 'cause I'm not sure we hit it heavily enough. Issues on group size.

Dr. Bergeron: Go ahead, Colleen.

Colleen: I was just going to, there's a lot of questions that have come in about, "Can I do this? Can I do that in planning for my summer program?" Which are all really great questions. Some about group size, like, "Do I have to, you know, could it, might it be smaller? What if I'm in a really rural area and I would need to either combine locations or have, you know, smaller class sizes than normal because there aren't as many, you know, families to come ... Rising kindergarten to come in the area?"

There are questions about, you know, "Can I have a higher salary as an incentive to work over the summer? Can I be half day instead of full day? Does it have to be all summer?" Like I think,

to answer all of these questions, we would say like you tell us what would work to operate this program in your community. And so, we want you guys to feel like you have the flexibility to say how it would work with knowing what the goal is. Is the goal is to get every rising kindergarten and child with an IEP into a Head Start summer program.

You tell us what it would need to work in your community and in some ways, let us say, you know, let us do the application process say, "That may not work," but generally we really want this to be flexible. We want you guys to tell us what you need and we're going to try to say "yes" on everything, if we can, as long as, you know, it works well with what the funding is for and that you're operating a program with that intent. So, we just want people to be able to have that flexibility in thinking about what they could do.

Dr. Bergeron: That's great. And that really is the sentiment. I hope—I hope everyone's hearing that loud and clear. Sometimes we get really stuck in the details and we don't have—we don't really have time for that. And, we also have a sense of urgency in that our children are losing a lot of growth opportunity. I would say I've talked several times over the last week or so that I really can just feel the achievement gap widening. If we see 4 year olds, 5 year olds sitting at home for six months before they step back into a classroom, it's like starting over for them and we know that. So, whatever we can do to patch that up and get those children ready so that they can feel, like alongside their peers, they are perfectly prepared for kindergarten that's really what we want to do. Heather, did you have another comment to make?

Heather: I did. I'm going to ... I wanted to jump back to the slide on the "Intent to Apply." So I think some ... I saw a couple of comments that I didn't get the email about the "intent." You don't really need an email. It's ... You can access the "Intent to Apply" directly in the Head Start Enterprise System. Under the "Financials" tab, you select the, "Add Amendment" icon, and you'll be able to see that "Intent to Apply" for summer 2020 programming. And that's where you would indicate whether or not you intend to apply. So, you don't necessarily need an email as long as you have access to HSES and can navigate to the "Financials" tab and add amendments.

Dr. Bergeron: And—and I do think all of the questions around "What if—what if we can open, what if we can open?" As I said in the very beginning, we are going to say "yes," and we're going to figure out how to do this as we move forward. Move forward with faith that number one, you'll be able to open. We really hope that's the case, even if it's only for four weeks in August. We hope that that can happen. And number two, that if you cannot open, we will figure out a solution to that. You don't need to worry about that piece right now. Move forward as if you can do this and then we will figure out the outcomes to not being able to do it. If that is in fact, you know, the state of affairs, and we'll keep you posted on that. [Inaudible] Voluntary.

All voluntary for sure. OK. But we do hope you're excited about it. I gotta be honest. I'm excited about it. We did not know if we would, if they would hear us, and they did. And you know, you really should pat yourselves on the back for that because that means that there was enough faith in the work that we do that they were willing to appropriate \$500 million to make up for lost time from this spring. That's a really big statement to how much faith they have in the program that you operate.

So, it's pretty ... It's great. And, we're excited to be part of that solution. So if that's all I'm going to go ahead and close up here. I do know that we ... This recording is going to be online, so if you missed any of it, you want to know somebody who wasn't able to make it and they want to look it up, they can listen. We will review the questions and see if we think we missed anything big. We'll try to circle back around. And again, thank you so much for all of the hard work you're doing. It's been a pure honor to be part of this team and to help all of us through this very uncertain time.

Make sure you're taking care of yourself; make sure your staff are taking care of themselves, as well. We know our families need us, but we need to make sure that we think of our own health in the meantime.

So, thank you so much. I hope everybody has a wonderful afternoon.