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FEDERAL UPDATE

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Congress is in recess for Easter

Stimulus Funds for Head Start and Early Head Start Released

On Thursday, April 2 the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) announced the release of funding for Head Start and Early Head Start programs under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). Head Start is slated to receive \$1 billion under ARRA, while Early Head Start will receive \$1.1 billion. The FY 2009 Omnibus Appropriations Act also increases Head Start funding for the year by \$235 million, bringing the total increase in funding for the two programs for FY 2009 to over \$2.3 billion.

With the ARRA funds, nearly \$220 million in grants will go to current Head Start grantees to help them serve an additional 16,600 children. Approximately \$1.2 billion in grants will support the expansion of Early Head Start programs. According to an HHS press release, it is hoped that program expansion will “create new jobs at Head Start and Early Head Start centers as additional staff are hired to handle increased enrollment.”

HHS also announced that nearly \$354 million of the ARRA funds will go towards improving staff compensation and training, upgrading centers and classrooms, improving transportation services, and increasing hours of operation. Another \$466 million will be used to award all Head Start and Early Head Start grantees a “nearly five percent cost-of-living increase” and to improve training and technical assistance.

Lastly, ARRA grants worth a total of \$100 million will be awarded to states for the purpose of establishing advisory councils on early childhood education and care, in order to improve coordination between Head Start, Early Head Start, and other early child care and education programs in the state.

According to HHS, “quality funds and the cost-of-living adjustment will be available immediately as grantees submit requests, and funds for expansion and advisory councils will be available as guidance is issued in the coming weeks.”

Below, please find a breakdown of the Head Start and Early Head Start funding. The chart is available on the HHS website, at www.hhs.gov/recovery.

	ARRA	Appropriation	Total
COLA	\$121,996,619	\$203,580,725	\$325,577,344
Quality	\$353,779,093	\$0	\$353,779,093
Head Start Expansion	\$199,612,157	\$20,000,000	\$219,612,157
EHS Expansion	\$1,156,612,157	\$0	\$1,156,612,157
State Advisory Councils	\$100,000,000	\$0	\$100,000,000
Head Start T/TA	\$24,999,975	\$5,820,275	\$30,820,250
EHS T/TA	\$110,000,000	\$0	\$110,000,000
Monitoring	\$33,000,000	\$0	\$33,000,000
Program Support	\$0	\$3,410,000	\$3,410,000
Centers of Excellence	\$0	\$2,000,000	\$2,000,000
	\$2,100,000,000	\$234,811,000	\$2,334,811,000

Pre-K programs compete for fiscal stabilization funds

Experts say funds should be used to improve quality

By Erin Uy

Education Department guidance for the use of State Fiscal Stabilization Fund money allows pre-K programs to receive dollars, signaling early success for Obama administration efforts to pull early childhood education out of its silo and connect such programs with K-12 education.

But whether fiscally strapped states will allocate money for pre-K is yet to be seen, and some policy analysts have expressed uncertainty over funding flowing down to pre-K.

OSEP: Don't wait to spend stimulus funds, see p. 3

Any injection of federal dollars into state pre-K programs would be notable as the federal government has historically limited its investment, funding only Head Start, Early Head Start, and Child Care and Development Block Grants. Funding opportunities for pre-K in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act's SFSF would add to the \$2.1 billion already provided in ARRA for Head Start and Early Head Start.

"I think this is one more indication that the money for Head Start and Early Head Start and [early childhood block grants] in the stimulus bill was just a down payment on the administration's effort in pre-K education," said Steven Barnett, codirector of the National Institute for Early Education Research.

Pre-K funding as intervention

ED last week released guidelines for SFSF, which designates about \$40 billion out of the total \$53.6 billion to help school districts avoid layoffs and program cuts. States must use the monies to address a handful of broad goals, one of which includes intervention services for lowest-performing schools — a mission ED said could be addressed by investments in pre-K.

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ED guidance states that districts have "considerable flexibility" to support pre-K, even if the programs are not considered part of elementary education. Most states operate pre-K and K-12 education through different funding streams, which often shut pre-K out of funding opportunities. It remains unclear whether the infusion of federal funds will have an impact on state investment of pre-K.

Kathy Patterson, senior officer of government relations for the Pew Center on the States, said the early childhood education community appreciates the emphasis on early education in the SFSF. However, states may need encouragement to allocate monies into that long-term investment, she added.

"We are hopeful, though, that the department and [Education Secretary Arne Duncan] will actively encourage [LEAs] to invest more dollars in pre-K," Patterson said. "At this critical time we need to invest in what works."

Quality vs. Quantity

In draft language of the ARRA, Congress expected stimulus funding to increase Head Start enrollment of low-income students by about 110,000 — an increase to the 910,000 students currently enrolled by the programs. Further, about 50,000 jobs would be created for Head Start teachers and staff.

However, Barnett said investment of stimulus monies into pre-K would likely not expand the number of children served, but would be used to improve program quality.

Barnett suggests states use funding for professional development programs or to extend the school day for existing programs. While summer programs may be beneficial, he warned of pressure associated with cutting programs once funding is depleted.

"It's good that [pre-K funding] is there," Barnett said. "I think we will have to wait and see how far the money goes given the revenue shortfalls in the state and local government."

