



Health Advisory Commission

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Adam Meier, DPHHS Director, Vice Chair
Anita Milanovich, General Counsel
Charlie Brereton, Policy Advisor

June 24, 2021

Director Adam Meier
Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services
PO Box 200801
Helena, MT 59602-0801

Dear Director Meier,

The Health Advisory Commission met on June 24, 2021 to consider American Rescue Plan Act funds allocated to the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services. Pursuant to HB 632, the Commission makes the following recommendations:

1. Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program Supplemental Funds for Federal Fiscal Years 2021-2022

Allocate \$27,134,445 in Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) funds. These funds will be used to reduce the energy costs for low-income persons and improve the health and safety of vulnerable populations by increasing the number of weatherized homes, providing a temporary increase in benefit payments, providing a temporary benefit to cover arrearages and emergency payments, and to improve the integration and coordination of LIHEAP with DPHHS's other public assistance programs. There shall be a \$3 million cap on spending for IT system upgrades. The department shall pursue, as needed, a waiver to spend up to 25% of the allocation on weatherization assistance.

2. Low-Income Home Water Assistance Program

Allocate \$1,684,482 in Low-Income Home Water Assistance Program funds. These funds will enable the state to temporarily reduce the home drinking water and wastewater costs for eligible low-income households through September 30, 2023.

3. American Rescue Plan Act of 2021: Grants to Enhance Adult Protective Services (APS)

Allocate \$645,450 to establish three Elder Justice Councils and to establish a forensic investigator, prosecutor, and training team to improve the identification, investigation, and prosecution of adult maltreatment.

4. Older Americans Act ARPA Funding

Allocate \$7,304,925 to fund supportive services, congregate meals, home delivered meals, preventative health services, family caregiver support, and the long-term care ombudsman.

5. Child Care Stabilization Grants, American Rescue Plan Act Section 2202

Recommendation #1:

Allocate \$6,807,574 (ten percent) for administration and operations within the stabilization funding, with half (\$3.4 million) dedicated to providing application assistance, capacity building, technical assistance, and business professional development. If actual expenses exceed \$3.4 million, DPHHS shall report to the Interim Budget Committee at the next scheduled meeting.

Recommendation #2:

Allocate \$31,246,766, which is 51% of the direct subgrant funds to be administered by DPHHS for purposes outlined by federal regulations, and reserve recommendations for the remaining funding following an assessment of application uptake and obligation rate.

*To the extent allowable by federal guidance,

- Prioritize subgrant funds to serve as enhanced payments for child care businesses that expand hours or capacity to serve more children.
- Prioritize subgrant funds as enhanced payments for child care businesses, including Family, Friend, and Neighbor caregivers in child care deserts.
- Prioritize subgrant funds as enhanced payments for child care businesses that serve unique populations such as children with disabilities, infants and toddlers, and low-income families.
- Require applications to be accepted from those provider types that are not licensed under the state, but can assure that all federal health and safety requirements, including background checks are met. This might include Family, Friend, and Neighbor caregivers and faith and community-based child care programs.
- Require child care businesses to dedicate a higher percentage of their subgrant to personnel to support recruitment and retention bonuses.
- Assess opportunities for the State of Montana to contract with child care provider(s) to serve state employees, their families, and others depending on capacity, and utilize stabilization and recovery funding accordingly and report back to Commission.

The Commission certifies that this proposal presently qualifies for funding pursuant to the American Rescue Plan Act and all available guidance.

Sincerely,



Representative Frank Garner
Health Advisory Commission Chair