

## Using the CARES Act to Strengthen Education Data Collection and Use

The [Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act \(CARES\) Act](#) provides \$30.75 billion in emergency aid to address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on early learning, elementary, secondary, and postsecondary programs. This dedicated education funding can be used for a very wide range of initiatives, which includes using funds to support data priorities such as rapid data collection, data system integration, and increased data system transparency. States can and should consider using some of this federal funding to increase the capacity of their data infrastructure.

**RAPID DATA COLLECTION AND USE.** CARES Act funding may be used for the collection and use of data to evaluate learning loss and fully understand the pandemic's broader impacts on students, school systems, and vulnerable communities:

- The CARES Act specifies that K–12 relief funding may be used to provide principals and other school leaders with resources to address the needs of their individual schools and to promote coordinated response and preparation.
- CARES Act funding may be used for teacher and leader data training consistent with the ESEA's professional development provisions (Title II-A).
- Postsecondary institutions may use CARES Act funding to cover "any costs" associated with significant changes to the delivery of instruction due to the coronavirus.

**CONNECTING DATA SYSTEMS.** CARES Act funding may be used to complete vitally important efforts to connect state agency data systems to provide comprehensive information about the programs serving children and older students:

- The CARES Act generally permits states to use the funding "for emergency needs as determined by the state educational agency to address issues responding to coronavirus."
- Specific provisions of the Student Support and Academic Enrichment block grant ("SSAEG", ESEA, Title IV-A) permit investments in "technology", including "data systems", "communications networks", and "software applications."

**PROVIDING ACCESS TO DATA.** CARES Act funding may be used to provide teachers, leaders, families and other stakeholder with access to useful information through data dashboards and other data tools:

- The CARES Act permits uses related to ESEA, which features specific references to data through the SSAEG, Title I, and other provisions.
- The CARES Act permits funds to be used for broadly defined purposes that help schools and institutions address student needs, as described in previous sections.

CARES Act funding is available *now* for states to use for these and other priorities. Also worth watching is the HEROES Act, recently passed in the House and up for consideration in the Senate. If passed, it would provide further opportunities to invest in education data, including through the bill's focus on promoting state agency coordination and based on the Elementary and Secondary Education Act's allowable data and technology investments. Using available funds for a targeted investment in data systems will better equip policymakers and educators to remediate the significant expected student learning loss caused by the pandemic, design the upcoming school year to meet student needs safely, and prepare students for college and the workforce.