

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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U.S Department of Education issues rule on CARES Act funds

Provides local flexibility in serving all New Hampshire students

CONCORD- The U.S Department of Education today issued the Interim Final Rule (IFR) on how local school districts should use funds provided under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act to provide equitable services for students attending non-public schools. Under the longstanding Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), school districts have been responsible for providing equitable service for these students, but districts were unclear how that responsibility applied to CARES Act funds.

The rule provides districts with two options, supporting all students affected by the COVID-19 pandemic or focusing those relief funds only on economically disadvantaged students. If districts choose to use CARES Act funds for all public school students in the district, they will also provide equitable services for all students, including non-public school students, in the district. If a district chooses to limit CARES Act funds to economically disadvantaged Title 1 eligible school students, equitable services would also, likewise, be limited to economically disadvantaged students in non-public schools.

"Throughout this pandemic, our priorities have been to give local school districts as much flexibility as possible to serve all of our students," said Education Commission Frank Edelblut. "So many students and families have seen their education disrupted through this pandemic. This rule continues to extend flexibility by allowing districts to choose the equitable service formula that best responds to the needs of their individual communities."

CARES Act grant funds were made available to districts on June 10, 2020. To date, 18 grant applications have been cleared to begin reporting expenses, 16 have been submitted and are awaiting edits or document submissions, 71 have been started but are not yet complete, and 79 have not yet been started. The Department of Education will be issuing additional technical guidance on the implementation of the rule and is available to help school districts calculate equitable services obligations to ensure services are getting to where they were intended.

The IFR has been unofficially published on the U.S. Department of Education's website <https://oese.ed.gov/files/2020/06/Equitable-Services-Final-Interim-Rule.pdf?utm_content=&utm_medium=email&utm_name=&utm_source=govdelivery&utm_term=>. It will be effective and open for public comment for 30 days once it has been officially published in the Federal Register.