

Remind

COVID-19 Funding For School Districts



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The coronavirus pandemic has disrupted learning for children and families in ways that haven't yet been fully understood. Although the longer-term effects of the past two years remain to be seen, schools and districts need immediate assistance in closing the gaps: from ensuring that students have access to the educational resources they need to supporting students and families who have felt disconnected because of the pandemic.

Although legislation guiding COVID-19 emergency funding was passed more than a year ago, relief is still available to help schools make up for learning losses and close significant equity gaps. Achieving these objectives requires a strong **communication network** that enables families and students to stay informed and engaged. Leveraging emergency funds toward these outcomes can be one of the best long-term investments a school district can make.

This guide walks through the COVID-19 funding still available to school districts, how to access emergency funds, and allowable uses for coronavirus relief spending, including options for purchasing Remind.



What types of COVID-19 emergency funding are still available?

Between 2020 and 2021, Congress passed three stimulus bills that appropriated more than \$2.3 billion to the Elementary and Secondary Emergency Education Relief Fund (ESSER or ESSERF). Ultimately paid out to local educational agencies (LEAs) or school districts, these funds provide relief from the impacts that COVID-19 continues to have on students.

In March 2020, Congress passed the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act, or ESSER I). In December 2020, the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSA Act, or ESSER II) became law, as did the American Rescue Plan Act (ARP Act, or ESSER III) in March 2021.

The ESSER Fund provides monetary support to state educational agencies (SEAs) to mitigate the pandemic’s impact on elementary and secondary schools across the country. Although the government has already disbursed some ESSER funds, **school districts can still benefit from many funding opportunities.**

How can my school district access coronavirus relief?

To access emergency funds, districts will need to apply to their SEA, which may be their state’s Department of Education. Districts under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs and Outlying Areas aren’t eligible, but they can apply for emergency funding through the U.S. Department of Education’s Education Stabilization Fund.

Eligible school districts have until **September 30, 2024** to obtain funds from their SEA. There are two additional details to keep in mind: Districts that have already received grants need to spend all their money before accessing new funding, and the funds for ESSER I, II, and III all need to be spent by different deadlines.

CARES Act (ESSER I)	CRRSA (ESSER II)	ARPA (ESSER III)
3/13/2020 - 9/30/2022	3/13/2020 - 9/30/2023	3/13/2020 - 9/30/2024

Submitting ESSER Plans

Districts need to submit two ESSER plans as part of the application package, one of which is the **Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan**. These plans should show the steps that will be taken to ensure the safe return of children, teachers, and staff to the physical site; they also need to outline their strategy for operational continuity.

The second component is the **ESSER III Expenditure Plan**. Districts and charter schools should expect to include a spending plan as part of their COVID-19 relief package breakdown. Proposals consist of descriptions of strategies for safe reopening, data-driven interventions, and how the spending will help meet the needs of disadvantaged students.



Purchasing the Remind communication platform with COVID-19 relief funds

School districts are required to allocate at least 20% of their funds to **address learning loss**.

Beyond this, the government provides significant flexibility on what qualifies as appropriate uses of COVID-19-related assistance, so districts can determine their most pressing needs for emergency funds.

Aside from sanitation and continuity of operations, funds can be spent on materials, projects, and initiatives that support learning and reduce or eliminate disruptions to students' educational experiences.

A longer list of allowable uses is available in the appendix.

Purchasing the Remind communication platform with COVID-19 relief funds

As a communication platform, Remind can fall under a number of the allowable uses for ESSER funds listed in **section 18003(d) of the CARES Act, section 313(d) of the CRRSA Act, and section 2001(e) of the ARP Act.** Below are some of these categories as well as examples of how districts and schools commonly use Remind.

Educational technology

Purchasing educational technology (including hardware, software, and connectivity) for students served by the LEA that aids in regular and substantive educational interactions between students and their classroom teachers, including low-income students and children with disabilities, which may include assistive technology or adaptive equipment.

Although the effects of the pandemic continue to evolve, the need for effective communication has been clearly established—not only to keep students and families informed about important news and updates, but to help keep them feeling engaged and supported as well.

A unified communication platform like Remind **helps facilitate student and family engagement** at the classroom, school, and district levels. Along with enabling two-way messaging between students and teachers, Remind enhances instruction with:



Integrations with LMS
and video conferencing
platforms



App integrations with
popular classroom tools



Voice clips and
multimedia attachments

Equitable communication

Providing principals and other school leaders with the resources necessary to address the unique needs of their individual schools.

Activities to address the unique needs of low-income children or students, children with disabilities, English learners, racial and ethnic minorities, students experiencing homelessness, and foster care youth, including how outreach and service delivery will meet the needs of each population.

Barriers to communication can prevent students and families from engaging in active learning, participating in co-curricular programs, and accessing essential educational resources. To advance educational equity, Remind:



Enables communication with students and families via text, so receiving and responding to messages **doesn't require a smartphone or internet connection.**



Provides **two-way translation in more than 90+ languages.**

Communication is automatically translated to the recipient's preferred language, so families can send and receive messages in their preferred languages (even by text).

Other COVID-specific use cases

The allowable uses for ESSER funds include a number of other applications that can be supported by a communication platform like Remind. For example, schools and districts frequently use Remind to:

- Disseminate up-to-date information on requirements for health and safety.
- Help educators and leaders exchange information and feedback asynchronously or in synchronous virtual environments.
- Generate and disclose plans for school closures or alternative schedules due to COVID-19 or other situations.
- Support after-school and summer programs by publicizing announcements and setting up virtual meetings when necessary.
- Enable translation functions for learners of English as a second language (ESL)
- Promote greater access to remote technologies for students with disabilities and low-income students.
- Facilitate remote and hybrid learning with user-friendly and accessible virtual technology.
- Support mental health by offering safe virtual spaces or links to downloadable apps.

Activities authorized by ESSA and IDEA

Any activity authorized by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA), or the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (Perkins) or the McKinney Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act.

Along with COVID-specific uses, districts can purchase Remind with relief funding under provisions for major education laws, including:



The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which supports technologies that bolster family engagement in education. Remind enables **two-way text messaging, multilingual translation, organization-wide messaging,** and other functions to improve how families get information that supports their children's academic needs.



The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which requires free and appropriate public education to eligible students with disabilities, including interventions that support special education. Remind allows students with special needs to receive **individualized tutoring and other interactive services.**



Learn more about COVID-19 funding for school districts

While these uses generally meet the criteria for ESSER III funding, districts should check with their SEAs when proposing the purchase of any tool for COVID-related relief. Using COVID-19 relief funding to invest in a communication platform like Remind can help districts address pandemic-related gaps and support longer-term goals for engagement and learning outcomes.

For more information about how you can integrate Remind with other district-level systems and use it to support other instructional tools and educational initiatives, visit remind.com/hub.

Appendix

List of Allowable Uses for ESSER I, II, and III Funds

Instruments, Supplies, and Materials to Help Ensure Health and Safety

- Providing materials, equipment, or tools for individual use
- Rental services that allow students to use items or tools without sharing

PPE, Cleaning Supplies and Sanitation

- Products that clean and sanitize instruments or tools
- Hand sanitizers, sprays, and disinfectant wipes
- Not requiring students to share items

Facility Considerations

- Signage, furniture, and equipment to accommodate social distancing
- Folding chairs, cubicle walls, and barriers to facilitate safe environments

Planning

- Develop and carry out plans for return-to-school
- Provide professional development time for teachers and staff
- Provide time to develop and plan new courses

PPE, Cleaning Supplies and Sanitation

- Hiring additional staff to accommodate students who were unable to participate during the 2020-2021 year
- Tools, resources, software, and teacher training for distance education/learning
- Support to provide access to virtual learning regardless of students' income
- Instruction or tutoring to accommodate students who cannot attend school in-person

Summer Programs

- Promote activities that make up for learning loss
- Provide learning opportunities and experiences and renew students' enthusiasm for return-to-school
- Address the needs of students with disabilities, low-income students, English Language learners, migrant students, students experiencing homelessness, and children in foster care