



STATE OF NEW JERSEY
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

A Memo from the New Jersey Department of Education

Date: May 12, 2021
To: Chief School Administrators, Charter School and Renaissance School Project Leads
Route to: School Business Administrators, Staff Involved with ESSER Funds
From: Kathy Ehling, Acting Assistant Commissioner
Division of Student Services
Deadline: June 24, 2021

American Rescue Plan Act Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ARP ESSER) Update: Website and Template LEA Plan for Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services

The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) is committed to providing regular ARP ESSER updates to local educational agencies (LEAs) as additional information becomes available. As announced in the NJDOE's April 28, 2021 [broadcast memo](#), in March 2021 President Biden signed the Federal American Rescue Plan ([ARP Act](#)), Public Law 117-2, into law. The ARP Act provides an additional \$122 billion in Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ARP ESSER) to States and school districts to help safely reopen, sustain the safe operation of schools, and address the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the nation's students. As with the previous ESSER funds available under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act and the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSA), the purpose of the additional funding is to support LEAs in preparing for and responding to the impacts of COVID-19 on educators, students, and families. Additional information on ARP ESSER may be found in the NJDOE's [fact sheet](#).

Section 2001(i)(1) of the ARP Act requires each LEA that receives ARP ESSER funds to develop and make publicly available on the LEA's website, no later than 30 days after receiving ARP ESSER funds, a plan for the safe return to in-person instruction and continuity of services for all schools (Safe Return Plan). A Safe Return Plan is required of all fund recipients, including those that have already returned to in-person instruction. Section 2001(i)(2) of the ARP Act further requires that an LEA seek public comment on the Safe Return Plan and take those comments into account when finalizing the Safe Return Plan. Pursuant to those requirements, **LEAs must submit to the NJDOE and post on their website their Safe Return Plans by June 24, 2021.** The NJDOE intends to make LEA ARP ESSER Fund applications available in EWEG on May 24, 2021 and LEAs will submit their Safe Return Plans to the NJDOE via EWEG. To assist LEAs with the development of their Safe Return Plans, the NJDOE will release a template for Safe Return Plans on May 24, 2021 on the new NJDOE [ARP ESSER webpage](#) that the Department is excited to announce today. The [webpage](#) summarizes key provisions of ARP ESSER.

The template will incorporate the federally required components of the Safe Return Plan as outlined in the ARP statute and federal regulations. The questions in the template will be included in the ARP ESSER Fund application in EWEG. LEAs will submit responses to the questions within the LEA ARP ESSER Fund application in EWEG by June 24, 2021. The NJDOE hopes that the template will allow LEAs to effectively plan for that submission and to easily post the information to their websites as required by the ARP Act.

Under the [interim final requirements](#) published by the U.S. Department of Education (USDE), an LEA must periodically, but no less frequently than every six months through September 30, 2023, review and, as

appropriate, revise its Safe Return Plan. The next periodic update of the Safe Return Plan for all fund recipients will be due on or before December 24, 2021, with more information to come.

The information contained in this Broadcast is designed to assist you with planning and meeting all requirements for APR ESSER funding. Question regarding the ARP ESSER funds should be directed to ESSER@doe.nj.gov.

c: Members, State Board of Education
Angelica Allen-McMillan, Ed.D., Acting Commissioner of Education
NJDOE Staff
Statewide Parent Advocacy Network
Garden State Coalition of Schools
NJ LEE Group