

Appropriations Recommendations

FOR FISCAL YEAR 2020

Phase IV COVID-19 Emergency Supplemental Funding

The American Psychological Association (APA) urges Congress to provide significant investments to support the nation’s psychological health and emotional well-being during this unprecedented time. While federal investments thus far have been appropriately focused on slowing viral transmission, reducing cases, optimizing health-system capacity, and preventing fatalities related to COVID-19, current data shows that Americans are already experiencing a surge in COVID-related mental and behavioral health problems—including increases in anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder.

In April 2020, a Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF) poll found nearly half of the American population reported that the COVID-19 pandemic was harming their mental health. In addition, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) recently reported that in the month of April alone, text messages to the federal government disaster distress hotline increased by more than 1,000 percent. Previous research on similar outbreaks, including the 2003 SARS pandemic, suggest a surge in COVID-related psychological problems will only be magnified in the coming months and years. In addition, available data shows that African Americans are experiencing significantly higher rates of mortality as result of COVID-19. America’s economic recovery relies on psychosocial support for its critical essential workforce, including low-paying jobs such as meat packing facility workers, grocery store clerks, cleaning crews, delivery workers, and a variety of other positions that tend to be filled by racial and ethnic minorities.

With the nation facing a population-wide mental health crisis, APA urges Congress to support the following recommendations for emergency supplemental funding in Phase IV COVID-19 legislation.

Strengthen support for mental and behavioral health services

As the demand for mental and behavioral health services continues to increase, APA urges Congress to protect and expand access to psychological services during the COVID-19 pandemic, including funding for essential behavioral health providers. APA joins more than a dozen of the nation’s leading mental health organizations in calling for \$38.5 billion to preserve existing treatment infrastructure. Within SAMHSA, APA urges Congress to provide additional support for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment (SAPT) Block Grant, and Community Mental Health Block Grant (MHBG). Within funding for the MHBG, APA urges Congress to provide a set-aside specifically for crisis intervention services. Finally, APA requests emergency funding for HRSA’s Graduate Psychology Education (GPE) Program and Behavioral Health Workforce Education and Training (BHWET) Program, which support the delivery of evidence-based mental and behavioral health services to at-risk populations that have faced significant challenges since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, including gaps in service delivery.

Department of Health and Human Services (Agency-Wide)	FY20 Emergency Supplemental Funding Request
Public Health and Social Services Fund	\$38.5 billion
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration	FY20 Emergency Supplemental Funding Request
Community Mental Health Block Grant (MHBG)	\$1 billion
Set-aside for Crisis Intervention Services	\$105 million
Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment (SAPT) Block Grant	\$1.5 billion
National Suicide Prevention Lifeline	\$61 million
Emergency Mental Health and Substance Use Training and Technical Assistance Center	\$20 million

Grants to Support Behavioral Health Needs Due to COVID-19	\$50 million
Health Resources and Services Administration	FY20 Emergency Supplemental Funding Request
Graduate Psychology Education Program (GPE)	\$25 million
Behavioral Health Workforce Education & Training Program (BHWET)	\$70 million

Prioritize funding that promotes health equity

With mounting evidence that COVID-19 is disproportionately impacting racial and ethnic minority communities across the United States (U.S.), particularly African Americans, APA urges Congress to invest in programs which mitigate health disparities that COVID-19 exacerbates, as well as address underlying social determinants of health. To ensure this, APA recommends all future COVID-19 funding packages should include language prohibiting discrimination by recipients of federal funds on any basis other than need or eligibility, such as (but not limited to) race, ethnicity, sex, age, and disability status, sexual orientation, gender identity, primary language, and immigration status.

Within the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), APA recommends emergency supplemental funding for COVID-19 response planning and implementation for HHS' Office of Minority Health, as well as other health equity offices located in AHRQ, CDC, CMS, FDA, HRSA, NIH and SAMHSA. For SAMHSA's Office of Behavioral Health Equity, APA recommends increased funding for culturally competent COVID-19 behavioral health outreach and communications for populations most at risk. APA recommends SAMHSA develop and implement a research-based communications strategy aimed at increasing knowledge of COVID-19 transmission risks and prevention among racial and ethnic minorities with co-morbid mental health and substance use disorders. Within the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), APA recommends supplemental funding for the Community Service Block Grant for COVID-related initiatives that address underlying social determinants of health.

Finally, American Indians and Alaska Natives are more vulnerable to COVID-19 due to longstanding inequalities and high rates of underlying medical conditions. Before the pandemic, the Indian Health Service (IHS) budget met just half of tribal needs. With IHS funds now stretched even further, APA urges Congress to provide more funding for healthcare infrastructure, including support for healthcare providers and psychological services. Further, APA recommends funds be allocated to IHS to support partnerships with the U.S. Public Health Service Corps to deliver Psychological First Aid training and focused interventions through Skills for Psychological Recovery, including behavioral health resilience, to support Native populations.

Department of Health and Human Services (Agency-Wide)	FY20 Emergency Supplemental Funding Request
Office of Minority Health	\$20 million
Health Equity Offices	\$140 million
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration	FY20 Emergency Supplemental Funding Request
Office of Behavioral Health Equity - Strategy and Grants	\$250 million
Administration for Children and Families	FY20 Emergency Supplemental Funding Request
Community Services Block Grant	\$3 billion
Indian Health Service	FY20 Emergency Supplemental Funding Request
Health care needs related to COVID-19 for Native Americans	\$2.1 billion
Mental Health/Social Services (MH/SS) Program	\$20 million

Provide emergency funding for COVID-related behavioral and social science research

While behavioral and social science research findings have informed the understanding of and response to COVID-19, additional research is required to improve response to this and future pandemics. APA recommends funding for the Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (OBSSR) within the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to establish one or more behavioral clinical trials networks to allow rapid testing of pandemic-related clinical trials and behavioral interventions, particularly targeting diverse populations.

In the absence of a vaccine or proven treatment, changing human behavior remains the primary means to prevent COVID-19 transmission. APA recommends funding for the National Science Foundation (NSF) to enter into an agreement with the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine (NASEM) to analyze behavioral and social science research relevant to multiple dimensions of pandemic response. This analysis should identify the fundamental knowledge needed to guide the nation as it combats infectious disease and other global public health crises.

Finally, APA strongly supports emergency supplemental relief for research funding agencies to allow them to prevent losses to university departments and labs, and maintain support for students, postdocs and other personnel whose work fuels the scientific enterprise. The proposal below would allocate funds as a percentage of total agency budgets to bridge the closures, delays, and loss of face-to-face research opportunities so that projects and infrastructure can be salvaged.

National Institutes of Health (NIH)	FY20 Emergency Supplemental Funding Request
Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (OBSSR)	\$10 million
National Science Foundation (NSF)	FY20 Emergency Supplemental Funding Request
National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine (NASEM) Study	\$ 1.5 million
Fund to Support Research Funding Agencies	FY20 Emergency Supplemental Funding Request
NIH, NSF, DoD, NASA, etc.	\$26 billion

Support victims and survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault

For much of the country, reports of domestic and sexual violence to hotlines and law enforcement have increased significantly while stay-at-home orders have been in place. Though these measures are necessary to slow the spread of COVID-19, it's important to remember that home is not always the safest place for everyone, especially for those experiencing domestic and sexual violence. Critical services for victims and survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking, require additional funding and flexibility to adapt to new circumstances, such as using virtual service delivery when appropriate, and implementing physical distancing guidelines in shelters and transitional housing settings.

Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women	FY20 Emergency Supplemental Funding Request
Sexual Assault Services Program	\$100 million
Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)	\$225 million
Transitional Housing Program	\$40 million
Outreach to Underserved Populations	\$10 million
Administration for Children and Families	FY20 Emergency Supplemental Funding Request
Family Violence Prevention Services	\$ 100 million

Expand efforts to prevent and respond to child trauma

While schools, childcare centers, and workplaces are closed due to COVID-19, families around the nation are experiencing high degrees of stress and uncertainty. The circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic and related stay-at-home orders place children at higher risk of exposure to child abuse and neglect and may also cause them to be less connected to trusted adults in their schools and communities. In addition, children and youth may also endure traumatic experiences, such as the loss of a teacher or family member as a result of the pandemic. In order to continue to serve children and families safely, community-based, family strengthening, and mental health services require additional funding to adapt to the new virtual environment.

Department of Education	FY20 Emergency Supplemental Funding Request
Grant program to expand trauma support services in schools	\$50 million
Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants	\$20 million
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration	FY20 Emergency Supplemental Funding Request
SAMHSA Project AWARE State Education Agency Grants	\$100 million
Administration for Children and Families (HHS)	FY20 Emergency Supplemental Funding Request
Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention Grant	\$1 billion
Mary Lee Allen Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program	\$1 billion
Social Services Block Grant	\$12.2 billion
National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN)	\$20 million

Increase support to states for K-12 and higher education

As state budgets continue to be impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, public education is likely to see significant cuts — both in both schools and institutions of higher education. Federal support is vital to ensuring that these cuts are less severe for students, teachers, and families. APA urges Congress to increase emergency funding to states to help stabilize education systems, including resources to support state efforts to maintain continuity of learning, make up for lost learning time, and address the growing academic, social-emotional, and mental and behavioral needs of students.

Department of Education	FY20 Emergency Supplemental Funding Request
K-12 Education State Stabilization Fund	At least \$175 billion
Higher Education State Stabilization Fund	\$50 billion
Programs serving historically marginalized students, including Title I and IDEA	\$25 billion
Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Parts B, C, and D	\$12.5 billion

Bolster the social safety net for low- and middle-income households and workers

Decades of psychological science indicate that when basic human needs such as safety, food, and shelter are threatened or not met, individuals will suffer severe mental and physical health consequences. As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to unfold, low- and middle-income Americans will face serious, prolonged challenges on the road to recovery, including in re-entering the workforce and regaining financial stability. APA urges Congress to provide emergency funding to support households that may experience nutrition or housing insecurity as a result of COVID-19, or are at risk of falling into poverty or deep poverty. APA encourages Congress to regularly reassess the state of critical safety net programs throughout the COVID-19 crisis and recovery.

Department of Agriculture	FY20 Emergency Supplemental Funding Request
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)	Increase minimum benefit from \$16 to \$30
Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer	Extend through September 2020
Department of Labor	FY20 Emergency Supplemental Funding Request
Emergency Paid Sick Leave & Paid Family and Medical Leave	Extend leave policies to broader workforce
Department of Housing & Urban Development	FY20 Emergency Supplemental Funding Request
Emergency Solutions Grants for Homeless Assistance	\$11.5 billion
Administration for Children and Families	FY20 Emergency Supplemental Funding Request
Child Care and Development Fund	\$50 billion

Make additional investments in broadband access for telemedicine and distance learning

As the U.S. continues to battle the COVID-19 pandemic, improving access to reliable, affordable high-speed internet and expanding the use of telemedicine, particularly to already underserved communities, has never been more important. This includes increasing availability of broadband for education purposes to address disparities for both K-12 and college students learning from home. APA urges additional investments in the following programs to ensure that communities around the nation have equitable access to the resources they need while the COVID-19 pandemic persists, and social-distancing measures remain in place.

Department of Agriculture	FY20 Emergency Supplemental Funding Request
ReConnect Program & Community Connect Grants	\$84 billion
Telecommunication Infrastructure Loans and Loan Guarantees	
Distance Learning and Telemedicine Grants	
Health Resources and Services Administration	FY20 Emergency Supplemental Funding Request
Telehealth Network Grant Program (TNGP)	\$20 billion
Federal Communications Commission (FCC)	FY20 Emergency Supplemental Funding Request
E-Rate Program	\$4 billion
National Telecommunications and Information Administration	FY20 Emergency Supplemental Funding Request
Emergency Higher Education Connectivity fund	\$1 billion