



FFYF Mini-Update 3.27.09

Greetings, Colleagues, and Happy Friday!

We just wanted to share some of the information that we're picking up, and also pass along some new and different analysis of the ARRA bill.

Important Happenings Next Week

First the buzz, much of which is still unconfirmed but comes to you thanks to several of DC's finest early childhood organizations that have been busy rattling chains in search of more information on stimulus guidance and applications. The good news is that dollars and information are starting to flow, so get ready.

Here's what we're hearing might happen next week:

- Information on Head Start is expected to be released on Monday, March 30.
- On Tuesday, March 31st, IDEA Part C guidance will be issued, as well as the application and guidelines (with FAQs) for the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund.
- Child Care guidance will be released on Wednesday, April 1.
- IDEA and Title 1 money may also move out the door sometime next week.

Please bear in mind that these dates are just estimates, and may change over the next few days as more information becomes available.

One Step Closer to an HHS Secretary

Next Thursday, HHS Secretary-Designate Kathleen Sebelius will testify before the Senate Finance Committee, which will then decide whether to send the nomination to the full Senate. She's expected to face little opposition. On Tuesday, as a courtesy, Sebelius is also scheduled to go before the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee.

With health care reform decidedly one of the thorniest issues for the Department, will anybody on the committees pay attention to early childhood? It's hard to say. But Governor Sebelius does have a pretty good track record on the issue, and we should all be on the lookout for opportunities to remind the powers that be how important that is. Start thinking about letters to the editor, op-eds, and outreach to Congress that can get help put early education on the radar screen.

From the Deep Dark Corners of the ARRA

The FFYF team has combed the pages of the Recovery Act in search of any and all opportunities for early childhood programs. Admittedly, some of these are a little more of a stretch than others, but they're all a good reminder that we need to think beyond the "usual suspects" and be creative in our quest for more resources to serve young children.

USDA

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program: SNAP, formerly known as the Food Stamp Program, will receive \$20 billion over the next five years -- an important stimulus to the economy. Starting in April, a participating household of four will receive an increase of \$80 in benefits. Over 5 years, the increases in benefits are estimated to total \$20 billion. The Recovery Act also provides nearly \$300 million to States for SNAP administrative expenses in FY2009 and 2010.

Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC): An additional amount of \$500 million, \$400 million of which shall be held in reserve to be allocated as the Secretary deems necessary. \$100 million has been provided to establish, improve, or administer WIC management information systems in order to meet new legislative or regulatory requirements.

National School Lunch Program: Additional \$100 million to carry out a competitive grant program to schools for the purchase of school food service equipment.

Rural Community Facilities Program: \$130 Million to support loans and grants for rural community facilities including hospitals, health clinics, health and safety vehicles and equipment, public buildings, and child and elder care facilities.

HUD

Community Development Block Grant: \$1 billion for approximately 1,200 state and local governments to invest in their own community development priorities. Most local governments use this investment to rehabilitate affordable housing and improve key public facilities -- stabilizing communities and creating jobs locally.

Neighborhood Stabilization Program: \$2 billion invested in mitigating the impact of foreclosures through the purchase and rehabilitation of foreclosed, vacant properties in order to create more affordable housing and renew neighborhoods devastated by the economic crisis.

Homelessness Prevention: \$1.5 billion invested in preventing homelessness and enabling the rapid re-housing of homeless families and individuals, helping them reenter the labor market more quickly and preventing the further destabilization of neighborhoods.

Interior

\$500 million for the Bureau of Indian Affairs will be used to replace and upgrade Indian schools that will benefit the 47,000 Indian children that are educated in these schools. These projects will provide access for the disabled, replace inefficient heating and cooling systems, and create a better learning environment.

Treasury

Temporary Increase of Refundable Portion of Child Credit: The Child Tax Credit, designed to help offset the cost of raising a child, is a partially refundable federal income tax credit of up to \$1,000 per child (under age 17). Families can qualify for at least a partial credit if their earnings exceed a prescribed level, or “earnings threshold.” Earnings threshold is lowered to \$3,000, helping more people qualify for the credit and receive more money; for 2008 the earnings threshold was \$8,500. Working families with earnings above \$3,000 may qualify for at least a partial credit

Temporary Increase in Earned Income Tax Credit: Increased EITC amounts for families with 3 or more children to 45%.

School Construction

(For more information on these opportunities, see the National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities at www.edfacilities.org.)

Tax Credits: State and local government may issue up to \$22 billion in “qualified school construction bonds” (\$11 billion in 2009 and \$11 billion in 2010), a new type of tax credit bond for “the construction, rehabilitation, or repair of a public school facility, or for the acquisition of land on which such a facility is to be constructed.”

Impact Aid: The bill provides \$100 million for construction grants to “Impact Aid” school districts (those serving students from government installations or Indian tribes). Forty percent of the funds go to formula grants, 60 percent to competitive grants for emergency repairs and school modernization.