



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

OFFICE OF POLICY AND MANAGEMENT
Intergovernmental Policy and Planning Division

To: Municipal Chief Executive Officials
Municipal CRF Program COVID Contacts
Superintendents of Schools
Directors of Regional Councils of Governments
DEMHS Region Coordinators

From: Melissa N. McCaw, Secretary
Konstantinos Diamantis, Deputy Secretary

Date: December 16, 2020

RE: **Municipal Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF) Program**
July 1 - December 30, 2020 Claim Period

To date the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) has reimbursed municipalities for all reported claims through June 30, 2020 for a total of approximately \$14.5 million from the Municipal Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF) Program. Notably the actual incurred expenses through June 30th were significantly lower than municipalities originally estimated. Connecticut's Municipal CRF Program originally was structured to provide funds on a reimbursement basis after the processing of FEMA claims. Due to the time delays in FEMA claims processing, and to maximize support to our municipalities, OPM will be immediately providing a direct \$45.5 million allocation of the Municipal CRF Program funds to support municipalities costs for the period July 1 - December 30, 2020.

Please note: the eligible uses of this funding, which are detailed further in this communication, have been expanded to include public health and safety personnel costs.

Testing has been critical to slow the spread of coronavirus and mitigate its threat to public health, particularly for the most at-risk populations and our educational system. Therefore \$15 million of the \$75 million Municipal CRF Program allocation has been reserved to expand regional testing opportunities for teachers and staff to mitigate this expense for LEA's and municipalities and provide increased support for safe operations of our schools.

In summary, the Municipal CRF Program funds of \$75 million will be distributed as follows:

- Reimbursed Claims through June 30, 2020 - \$14.5 million
- Final allocation with expanded usage - \$45.5 million
- Regional testing opportunities for municipal teachers and staff - \$15 million

The remaining Municipal CRF funds of \$45,498,170 will be allotted based on the population formula below. A town by town allotment listing is attached.

- 33% population density
- 33% population / Adjusted Equalized Net Grand List per Capita
- 34% population

Funding has been provided to all 169 municipalities. Health Districts, Special Tax Districts and Fire Districts need to work through their municipality for claiming any reimbursements against their Municipal CRF Program allotment.

Please refer to these website links for additional information on CRF:

- [Coronavirus Relief Fund Overview](#)
- [Municipal CRF Program](#)

Eligible Uses

Funding is being provided to cover the following:

COVID eligible expenses:

- Under federal law, eligible uses must meet three conditions. They must be:
 - "Necessary expenditures incurred due to the public health emergency with respect to...COVID-19"
 - Funds may not be used to substitute for lost revenue
 - Not budgeted as of March 27, 2020 when the CARES Act was enacted
 - May not supplant state or municipal spending
 - Incurred on or after March 1, 2020, through December 30, 2020
- Please refer to previous documentation on eligible expenses at:
<https://portal.ct.gov/OPM/Coronavirus/Coronavirus-Relief-Fund/Municipal-CRF-Program>

Public health and public safety personnel costs

Guidance from Department of Treasury:

- In recognition of the particular importance of public health and public safety workers to State, local, and tribal government responses to the public health emergency, Treasury has provided, as an administrative accommodation, that a State, local, or tribal government may presume that public health and public safety employees meet the substantially dedicated test, unless the chief

executive (or equivalent) of the relevant government determines that specific circumstances indicate otherwise. This means that, if this presumption applies, work performed by such employees is considered to be a substantially different use than accounted for in the most recently approved budget as of March 27, 2020. All costs of such employees may be covered using payments from the Fund for services provided during the period that begins on March 1, 2020, and ends on December 30, 2020.

- In response to questions regarding which employees are within the scope of this accommodation, Treasury is supplementing this guidance to clarify that public safety employees would include police officers (including state police officers), sheriffs and deputy sheriffs, firefighters, emergency medical responders, correctional and detention officers, and those who directly support such employees such as dispatchers and supervisory personnel. Public health employees would include employees involved in providing medical and other health services to patients and supervisory personnel, including medical staff assigned to schools, prisons, and other such institutions, and other support services essential for patient care (e.g., laboratory technicians) as well as employees of public health departments directly engaged in matters related to public health and related supervisory personnel.
- The guidance provides that funding may be used to meet payroll expenses for public safety, public health, health care, human services, and similar employees whose services are substantially dedicated to mitigating or responding to the COVID-19 public health emergency. May Fund payments be used to cover such an employee's entire payroll cost or just the portion of time spent on mitigating or responding to the COVID-19 public health emergency?

As a matter of administrative convenience, the entire payroll cost of an employee whose time is substantially dedicated to mitigating or responding to the COVID-19 public health emergency is eligible, provided that such payroll costs are incurred by December 30, 2020. An employer may also track time spent by employees related to COVID-19 and apply Fund payments on that basis but would need to do so consistently within the relevant agency or department.

Testing:

- Through the state's Community Testing Program, all residents have robust access to no-cost COVID-19 testing through multiple hospital, community health center and other community pop-up sites. Turn-around-time for results through this program is averaging 72 hours or under. Some providers may recommend appointments or pre-registration to facilitate

expedited testing. State sponsored sites may be accessed via www.ct.gov/prioritytesting.

- The state is working with its contracted partners to provide priority access and extended hours for educators, school staff, and other critical workforce as needed. More information will be forthcoming in the coming weeks on this effort.
- CT DPH currently recommends the use of mitigation efforts to prevent COVID-19 transmission in schools. In addition, BinaxNOW rapid antigen tests are available at no cost to school districts and other organizations. This antigen test is generally for symptomatic individuals only; schools must also have appropriate staff, infection control measures and other measures in place to administer these tests on site. To date, many of our state's school districts and school based clinics have utilized these tests for symptomatic staff or students.

Enforcement of Executive Orders:

- As noted above, this funding can be used broadly to support public health and safety personnel and fringe costs and be substantially dedicated to support the COVID-19 public health emergency, thereby providing budget relief to support enforcement.
- Sector Rule enforcement is outlined in Governor Lamont's Executive Orders 7PP (issued 5/18/2020 authority for business closure), 9B (issued on 9/15/2020 authority for issuing fines) and 9N (issued on 11/24/2020 authority to issue \$10,000 Civil Penalties) allow local officials the ability to enforcement Sector Rules. Work to enforce the Sector Rules can be implemented by a variety of local officials including local health officials, local police departments, municipal designees, and other municipal officials. Sector Rule enforcement work can be supported by this funding.
- DPH along with DECD and DEMHS presented three webinars to educate local officials on Sector Rule enforcement. A Sector Rule enforcement toolbox was presented focused on local team building to practice progressive discipline to include items such as education, written warnings, business closure, liquor license summary suspension, consent orders, infraction ticketing, and \$10,000 civil penalty. Further, the State recently enacted an Enforcement Task Force including DPH, DECD, DCP, DEMHS, and Local Health Directors to focus on sharing guidance and best practices.

Disbursement of Funds

To streamline the process, municipalities will need to access the OPM Portal and complete a simple certification process. There will be no upload of transactional detail or FEMA acceptance letter for this claim period.

Municipalities, through their COVID Portal contact, will complete the web-based reimbursement and certification process. Instructions will be sent separately. Claims must be submitted no later than **5:00 PM Friday, December 18, 2020**. Once OPM has reviewed and verified the certification, payment will be processed approximately within one week.

Audit Provisions and Documentation

Federal Coronavirus Relief Fund expenditures are subject to Single Audit by an Inspector General within the U.S. Department of the Treasury. Documenting that costs were eligible uses are essential to managing compliance risk and to minimizing the possibility that the costs are deemed ineligible, thereby requiring that the municipality and the state may need to return funds to the federal government.

We ask that you document costs clearly with respect to the date and nature of the expense incurred so that together we can best manage resources in the interests of the residents of Connecticut. In general, you should document expenses with the same specificity as for FEMA reimbursements.

For questions and additional information on the Municipal CRF Program, please contact Acting Undersecretary Martin Heft at martin.heft@ct.gov or 860.418.6355.

Thank you for your continued cooperation as we work together to protect the interests of all our residents.