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CARES Act Funding Helps EDC Schools Operate In-person

Through a strong partnership between the El Dorado County Chief Administrative Office, El Dorado County Board of Supervisors, El Dorado County Office of Education (EDCOE) and 15 school districts, $5 million of Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding helped school sites and county-wide educational programs provide in-person instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The CARES Act was passed by Congress and signed into law March 27, 2020, and local officials determine how those dollars are allocated. The El Dorado County Board of Supervisors believes that supporting education is crucial and unanimously approved staff’s recommendation to direct vital CARES resources to schools.

“The Board of Supervisors and staff from the Public Health department recognize the vital nature of continuing to provide in-person education for our students and reducing the amount of interruption and upheaval to both students and their families,” said John Hidahl, Chair of the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors. “Therefore, the County was delighted to make the $5 million in CARES Act funds available to EDCOE to use as their expertise sees fit.”

EDCOE and district leaders administered funding in four areas of focus that included surveillance COVID-19 testing, safety and personal protective equipment (PPE), child care and mental health. For example, in September, EDCOE utilized one million dollars and began COVID-19 surveillance testing for educators and support staff across the county. Following the California Department of Health recommendation, every month this routine testing system is able to test 50 percent of staff throughout the county, with the goal of tracking any infections and identifying potential asymptomatic individuals.

To help support safety measures, funding was allocated to purchase commercial hydrochloric acid generators which provided EDCOE and several school districts with a safe disinfectant for classrooms and office settings. Funds were also used to purchase additional PPE for programs. Ionization devices that reduce airborne particles are also being installed across the county in classrooms and educational offices to fortify existing safeguards.

In the area of childcare, CARES funding supported the Boys and Girls Clubs of Lake Tahoe and Western Slope, allowing both organizations to provide full and partial day care for students. Dollars were also allocated to help EDCOE’s Extended Day program offer full day care opportunities to families and school staff, as well as to expand to additional sites.

To help address mental health issues that have been exacerbated by the pandemic, funding was allocated to connect students and families to mental health services. “The CARES funding is instrumental to our schools’ and county-wide programs’ ability to conduct in-person instruction,” Dr. Ed Manansala, El Dorado County Superintendent of Schools stated. “As we have expressed many times – Learning is a non-negotiable, and in-person instruction is preferred, but only if it is safe for students and staff. The CARES Act dollars and our county partners made that possible.”

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