

REPORT TO THE VERMONT LEGISLATURE

Agency of Human Services

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UPDATE ON GRANTS FOR LOAN REPAYMENT AND TUITION ASSISTANCE FOR MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER TREATMENT PROFESSIONALS

In accordance with Act 183 of 2022: An act relating to economic and workforce development.

Submitted to: House and Senate Committees on Appropriations, House Committee on Health Care, House Committee on Human Services, and Senate Committee on Health and Welfare

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LEGISLATIVE REQUEST

Section 29e of Act 183 of 2022 states: “The amount of \$1,250,000.00 is appropriated from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) – Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Funds to the Agency of Human Services to be distributed to the designated and specialized service agencies equitably based on each agency’s proportion of full-time-equivalent (FTE) mental health and substance use disorder treatment staff to the total number of FTE mental health and substance use disorder treatment staff across all designated and specialized service agencies statewide. The designated and specialized service agencies shall use these funds for loan repayment and tuition assistance to promote the recruitment and retention of high-quality mental health and substance use disorder treatment professionals available to Vermont residents in need of their services.... On or before March 1, 2023, the Agency of Human Services shall make a presentation available to the House Committees on Appropriations, on Health Care, and on Human Services and the Senate Committees on Appropriations and on Health and Welfare on the use of the funds appropriated in this section.”

UPDATE

Grantmaking associated with Section 29e of Act 183 of 2022 has three main components: planning, allocation, and distribution.

Regarding planning, the Agency of Human Services (AHS) has determined allowable uses for the State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF) appropriated for this program. AHS has defined program parameters that align with the U.S. Department of Treasury's guidance conveyed in the "Behavioral Health Care" section of the SLFRF Final Rule. AHS is working with two of its departments, the Vermont Department of Health and the Department of Mental Health, on program design and implementation. To maximize efficiency and coordination, this new grant program is being aligned with existing grant programming administered by the Vermont Department of Health.

Regarding allocation, AHS will leverage data on mental health and substance use disorder treatment full-time equivalents from all DAs/SSAs through the Premium Pay for Workforce Recruitment and Retention Program. DAs/SSAs were expected to submit these data as part of their Mid-program Evaluation Report due January 16, 2023. As of March 1, 2023, AHS has received most of the relevant data. AHS is working with the remaining agencies to submit their reports. Once all reports are submitted, AHS will be able to calculate the allocation for each agency.

AHS will then execute grant awards with each DA/SSA based on the determined allocation. Each DA/SSA will be able to use the grants for loan repayment and tuition assistance to promote the recruitment and retention of high-quality mental health and substance use disorder treatment professionals who serve Vermont residents in need of their services. AHS will distribute funds based on quarterly financial reporting.