



## American Rescue Plan Funding – Now is the time to Advocate!

Armando Fernandez, Region X Representative & Rey Vargas, Legislative Chair

President Biden recently signed the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 into law. This is the latest COVID-19 relief bill and includes \$122.8 billion for K-12 under the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund. California schools will be receiving \$15.3 billion. The majority of the funds (90%) will be going directly to districts based on their share of Title 1 funding.

Many schools in California have begun to re-open and bring students and staff back to the school setting. After being out of school for more than a year, our students will need more social and emotional supports than ever to address the major disruption to their lives. These funds can be leveraged to meet their needs. This relief bill brings a unique opportunity for county offices of education and districts to fund school mental health professionals in supporting students and their families.

School Psychologists are trained in a variety of skills to provide mental health services and supports to our school communities. This funding can be used in a variety of ways to enhance your practice and service delivery to students, ranging from supplies and technology to trainings and resources. For example:

- ❖ New Laptops and related items (headsets)
- ❖ IPADS used for assessments
- ❖ Access to digital platforms
- ❖ Staff development and training (CASP Spring Institute)
- ❖ SEL Curriculum and materials for universal and targeted school based mental health services
- ❖ Expansion of School Psychology Intern programs
- ❖ Funding to address assessment backlog (ie. timesheet work over the summer)
- ❖ School based mental health and wellness supports and services for students, parents and educators

Speak to your boards of education, directors, and superintendents to consider using these funds to enhance the great work you do day in and day out. Addressing mental health and learning loss is a key issue in everyone's mind right now so they should be very receptive to what you bring to the table!

This is a call to action. **The time is now.** Ask your leadership teams to support you and the students you serve! To help you plan your conversations, here are some possible talking points and considerations.

- Identify the various “needs” at various levels:
  - District: Equal access to various assessment tools for all psychologists in the district.
  - Site Specific: Social/Emotional Learning tools specific to a population at that site. (e.g., therapy materials, sensory items, etc.)
  - School Psych Specific: Computers and Technology
- Be ready with figures and amounts that the “needs” will cost:
  - Many companies will be able to give you quotes or estimated costs.
- Be ready to answer the question as to how the purchase or the ask will impact student learning.
- Identify who you will need to speak to regarding the requests. Consider scheduling an in-person meeting or Zoom meeting when making the request.