




UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

September 10, 2021

MEMORANDUM

TO: Lindsay Abate
Office of Management and Budget Desk Officer

FROM: Ian Rosenblum 
Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy and Programs
Delegated the Authority to Perform the
Functions and Duties of the Assistant Secretary
Office of Elementary and Secondary Education

RE: Emergency Request for Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) approval

Pursuant to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) procedures established at 5 CFR 1320, the U.S. Department of Education (Department) requests the following collection of information to be collected from Local educational agencies (LEAs) that receive funds under the Project to Support America's Families and Educators (SAFE) Grant Program be processed in accordance with section 1320.13 Emergency Processing.

The Department recognizes that local educational agencies need resources as quickly as possible to address the evolving nature of the extended novel COVID-19 pandemic to meet the needs of students and staff. We plan to utilize an anticipated balance of funds in the FY 2021 School Safety National Activities (SSNA) budget, to support the Biden Administration's direction for the Department to provide financial support to educators and districts being financially sanctioned by their State for adopting and implementing CDC guidance to protect students and staff from the COVID-19 virus. Project SAFE would be a new discretionary grant program created in response to the Biden Administration's direction.

SSNA grant funds must be used to improve student safety and well-being, including by addressing the harmful impact of disruptive State penalties imposed on the LEA for implementing CDC guidance. For example, an allowable use of grant funds may include activities to facilitate the continued implementation of strategies aligned with CDC guidance, despite the State-imposed penalty, and/or maintaining LEA and school stability, such as by enabling the LEA to make up for financial penalties levied on the LEA for implementing strategies aligned with CDC guidance including but not limited to the reduction in salaries for the superintendent or school board members.

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The Department of Education's mission is to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access.

Under the new Project SAFE grant program, applications will be submitted on a rolling basis before the end of fiscal year (FY) 2021 and throughout fiscal year 2022. Upon receipt of the applications, the intent is to quickly review and make approval decisions of awards as quickly as possible to make the award the funds before the end of this fiscal year. The application requires submission of information about the LEA's eligibility and needs of its students, educators, schools, and school staff. An LEA is eligible for Project SAFE if it:

- (a) has adopted a policy to implement and is implementing one or more specific strategies drawn from the recommendations in the CDC's most recent [Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools](#);
- (b) Has incurred or will incur a financial penalty imposed by its SEA or other State entity, such as a reduction in funding, including but not limited to reduction in salaries for school board members or superintendents, due to implementation of one or more strategies described in paragraph (a); and
- (c) To protect the safety and well-being of students, has continued at the time of application to implement such strategy or strategies for which the penalty was imposed and commits to maintain such strategy or strategies to the extent consistent with CDC guidance for the 2021-2022 school year.

The Project SAFE grant program timeline is extremely short due to the Biden Administration's direction to the Department to create the program to address urgent needs. For these reasons, we are requesting emergency approval of the Project SAFE application so that LEAs can demonstrate their eligibility and need to implement the program as intended and receive funds to address the immediate needs of their students, staff, and schools.

The application will be made available as quickly as possible next week. If this emergency collection is not approved, the Department will not be able to carry out the Biden Administration's direction to the Department and to ensure needed resources are available to LEAs in a timely manner to immediately address related needs of returning students and educators to safe, healthy, supportive in-person learning environments impacted by the pandemic.

To reduce the burden on LEAs, the Department has created an application LEAs must use to collect the required information. We anticipate that approximately 13 LEAs will respond, and we estimate that the application template will take approximately 2 hours for each LEA to complete.

In order to provide LEAs adequate time to submit their applications, the Department request approval of this submission timed with approval of the NIA. Given the inability to seek public comment during such a short timeframe for this emergency collection, the Department will also provide 60-day language as part of the notice in the Federal Register seeking public comment for the regular information collection.