

Federal Coronavirus Relief Background

Congress approved and the President signed several bi-partisan bills this year in response to the coronavirus. The measures each had different titles like the “Families First Coronavirus Response Act,” and the “CARES Act,” but they were all designed to provide urgent relief during the pandemic.

Still, more needs to be done to support the unique needs of people with disabilities, their families and service providers.

Congress is currently considering another coronavirus relief package and it’s important that lawmakers recognize and prioritize funding for people with disabilities in the next legislative deal.

One of the new bills is called “The Heroes Act,” which was approved by the House of Representatives in May. That piece of legislation includes the most significant coronavirus relief yet for people with disabilities and dedicates resources for programs that will help support healthy outcomes. The bill includes:

- Additional funding for Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) to help keep people with developmental disabilities safe in their communities and away from institutionalized settings.
- Increased funding for the Housing for Persons with Disabilities program to support more affordable housing and homeless services.
- Personal Protective Equipment.
- Additional money for direct support professionals.
- More financial resources for family caregivers, including paid family leave.
- Stimulus payments for adults with developmental disabilities who live at home and are considered dependents.

This dedicated funding is **essential**.

Now, the U.S. Senate has its own coronavirus relief package. Released Monday, July 27th, the HEALS Act is designed to address schools, jobs, economic assistance and health care.

The Senate and House of Representatives must now negotiate a bi-partisan compromise bill that can pass both houses.

Whatever the final bill is called, it’s critical that lawmakers approve a new coronavirus relief package that includes dedicated funding for people with disabilities to help ensure they maintain a stable, safe and healthy environment during the coronavirus pandemic.