

considered “programs and services” and are not presumed to be reasonably proportional responses to an identified harm except as provided in section Capital Expenditures in General Provisions: Other.

In other words, recipients can provide behavioral health services to members of the general public without any further analysis of impacts of the pandemic on those individuals and whether the service is responsive. Recipients may also use this eligible use category to respond to increased rates of behavioral health challenges at a population level or, at an individual level, new behavioral health challenges or exacerbation of pre-existing challenges, including new barriers to accessing treatment.

Services that respond to these impacts of the public health emergency may include services across the continuum of care, including both acute and chronic care, such as prevention, outpatient treatment, inpatient treatment, crisis care, diversion programs (e.g., from emergency departments or criminal justice system involvement), outreach to individuals not yet engaged in treatment, harm reduction, and supports for long-term recovery (e.g., peer support or recovery coaching, housing, transportation, employment services).

Recipients may also provide services for special populations, for example, enhanced services in schools to address increased rates of behavioral health challenges for youths, mental health first responder or law enforcement-mental health co-responder programs to divert individuals experiencing mental illness from the criminal justice system, or services for pregnant women with substance use disorders or infants born with neonatal abstinence syndrome. Finally, recipients may use funds for programs or services to support equitable access to services and reduce racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic disparities in access to high-quality treatment.

Eligible uses of funds may include services typically billable to insurance<sup>78</sup> or services not typically billable to insurance, such as peer support groups, costs for residence in supportive housing or recovery housing, and the 988 National Suicide Prevention Lifeline or other hotline services. Recipients may also use funds in conjunction with other federal grants or programs (see section Program Administration Provisions), though

<sup>78</sup> However, SLFRF funds may not be used to reimburse a service that was also billed to insurance.

eligible services under SLFRF are not limited to those eligible under existing federal programs.

Given the public health emergency’s exacerbation of the ongoing opioid and overdose crisis, Treasury highlights several ways that funds may be used to respond to opioid use disorder and prevent overdose mortality.<sup>79</sup> Specifically, eligible uses of funds include programs to expand access to evidence-based treatment like medications to treat opioid use disorder (e.g., direct costs or incentives for emergency departments, prisons, jails, and outpatient providers to offer medications and low-barrier treatment), naloxone distribution, syringe service programs, outreach to individuals in active use, post-overdose follow up programs, programs for diversion from the criminal justice system, and contingency management interventions.

Finally, for clarity, Treasury has addressed the eligibility standard for capital expenditures, or investments in property, facilities, or equipment, in one section of this Supplementary Information; see section Capital Expenditures in General Provisions: Other. Examples of capital expenditures related to behavioral health that Treasury recognizes as eligible include behavioral health facilities and equipment (e.g., inpatient or outpatient mental health or substance use treatment facilities, crisis centers, diversion centers), as long as they adhere to the standards detailed in the Capital Expenditures section.

#### d. Preventing and Responding to Violence

*Background:* The interim final rule highlighted that some types of violence had increased during the pandemic and that the ability of victims to access services had decreased, noting as an example the challenges that individuals affected by domestic violence face in accessing services. Accordingly, the interim final rule enumerated as an eligible use, in disproportionately impacted communities, evidence-based community violence intervention programs. Following the release of the interim final rule, Treasury received several recipient questions regarding whether and how funds may be used to respond to an increase in crime,

<sup>79</sup> In line with the Department of Health and Human Services, Overdose Prevention Strategy, <https://www.hhs.gov/overdose-prevention/>, and the Office of National Drug Control Policy, Administration’s Statement on Drug Policy Priorities for Year One (April 1, 2021), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/BidenHarris-Statement-of-Drug-Policy-Priorities-April-1.pdf>.

violence, or gun violence in some communities during the pandemic. Treasury released further guidance identifying how enumerated eligible uses and eligible use categories under the interim final rule could support violence reduction efforts, including rehiring public sector staff, behavioral health services, and services to address negative economic impacts of the pandemic that may aid victims of crime. The guidance also identified an expanded set of enumerated eligible uses to address increased gun violence.

*Public Comment:* Several commenters expressed support for this use of funds.

*Treasury Response:* In the final rule, Treasury is maintaining enumerated eligible uses in this area and clarifying how to apply eligibility standards. Throughout the final rule, enumerated eligible uses should respond to an identified impact of the COVID-19 public health emergency in a reasonably proportional manner to the extent and type of harm experienced. Many of the enumerated eligible uses—like behavioral health services, services to improve employment opportunities, and services to address educational disparities in disproportionately impacted communities—that respond to the public health and negative economic impacts of the pandemic may also have benefits for reducing crime or aiding victims of crime. For example, the pandemic exacerbated the impact of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking; enumerated eligible uses like emergency housing assistance, cash assistance, or assistance with food, childcare, and other needs could be used to support survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, or human trafficking who experienced public health or economic impacts due to the pandemic.

*Public Comment:* Several commenters expressed support for community violence intervention programs or argued that traditional public safety approaches had negatively impacted the social determinants of health in their communities. Several commenters recommended inclusion of approaches like mental health or substance use diversion programs.

*Treasury Response:* Treasury recognizes the importance of comprehensive approaches to challenges like violence. The final rule includes an enumerated eligible use for community violence intervention programs in all communities, not just the disproportionately impacted communities eligible under the interim final rule. Given the increased rate of violence during the pandemic, Treasury has determined that this enumerated

eligible use is responsive to the impacts of the pandemic in all communities. The final rule incorporates guidance issued after the interim final rule on specifically types of services eligible, including:

- Evidence-based practices like focused deterrence, street outreach, violence interrupters, and hospital-based violence intervention models, complete with wraparound services such as behavioral therapy, trauma recovery, job training, education, housing and relocation services, and financial assistance; and
- Capacity-building efforts at community violence intervention programs like funding more intervention workers, increasing their pay, providing training and professional development for intervention workers, and hiring and training workers to administer the programs.

*Public Comment:* Some commenters sought further clarification on whether some of the enumerated eligible uses are considered responsive to all crime, violent crime, or gun violence.

*Treasury Response:* Enumerated eligible uses that respond to an increase in gun violence may be pursued in communities experiencing an increase in gun violence associated with the pandemic, specifically: (1) Hiring law enforcement officials—even above pre-pandemic levels—or paying overtime where the funds are directly focused on advancing community policing strategies for gun violence, (2) additional enforcement efforts to reduce gun violence exacerbated by the pandemic, including prosecuting gun traffickers, dealers, and other parties contributing to the supply of crime guns, as well as collaborative federal, state, and local efforts to identify and address gun trafficking channels, and (3) investing in technology and equipment to allow law enforcement to more efficiently and effectively respond to the rise in gun violence resulting from the pandemic, for example technology to assist in the identification of guns whose serial numbers have been damaged.

### 3. Negative Economic Impacts

#### a. Assistance to Households Background

While the U.S. economy is now on the path to a strong recovery, the public health emergency, including the necessary measures taken to protect public health, resulted in significant economic and financial hardship for many Americans. As businesses closed, consumers stayed home, schools shifted to remote education, and travel declined

precipitously, over 22 million jobs were lost in March and April 2020.<sup>80</sup> One year later, in April 2021, the economy still remained over 8 million jobs below its pre-pandemic peak,<sup>81</sup> and the unemployment rate hovered around 6 percent.<sup>82</sup>

In the months since Treasury issued the interim final rule in May 2021, the economy has made large strides in its recovery. The economy gained over 4 million jobs in the seven months from May to November 2021;<sup>83</sup> the unemployment rate fell more than 1.5 percentage points to 4.2 percent, which is the lowest rate since February 2020;<sup>84</sup> and the size of the nation's economy surpassed the pre-pandemic peak in the second quarter of 2021.<sup>85</sup>

While the economy has made immense progress in its recovery since May 2021, the economy has also faced setbacks that illustrate the continued risks to the recovery. As the Delta variant spread across the country this summer and fall, the United States faced another severe wave of cases, deaths, and strain on the healthcare system, which contributed to a slowdown in the pace of recovery in the third quarter.<sup>86</sup> Supply chain disruptions have also demonstrated the difficulties of restarting a global economy.<sup>87</sup> Moreover, although many Americans have returned to work as of November 2021, the economy remains 3.9 million jobs below its pre-pandemic peak,<sup>88</sup> and 2.4 million workers have dropped out of the labor market altogether relative to February 2020.<sup>89</sup> Thus, despite much

progress, there is a continued need to respond to the pandemic's economic effects to ensure a full, broad-based, and equitable recovery.

Indeed, the pandemic's economic impacts continue to affect some demographic groups more than others. Rates of unemployment remain particularly severe among workers of color and workers with lower levels of educational attainment; for example, the overall unemployment rate in the United States was 4.2 percent in November 2021, but certain groups saw much higher rates: 6.7 percent for Black workers, 5.2 percent for Hispanic or Latino workers, and 5.7 percent for workers without a high school diploma.<sup>90</sup> Job losses have also been particularly steep among low-wage workers, with these workers remaining furthest from recovery as of the end of 2020.<sup>91</sup> A severe recession, and its concentrated impact among low-income workers, has amplified food and housing insecurity, with an estimated nearly 20 million adults living in households where there is sometimes or often not enough food to eat and an estimated 12 million adults living in households that were not current on rent.<sup>92</sup>

While economic effects have been seen across many communities, there are additional disparities by race and income. For example, approximately

Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/CLF16OV> (last visited December 7, 2021).

<sup>80</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey: Employment status of the civilian population by sex and age (December 6, 2021), <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.t01.htm> (last visited December 7, 2021); U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey: Employment status of the civilian noninstitutional population by race, Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, sex, and age (December 6, 2021), <https://www.bls.gov/web/empsit/cpseea04.htm> (last visited December 7, 2021); U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey: Employment status of the civilian noninstitutional population 25 years and over by educational attainment (December 6, 2021), <https://www.bls.gov/web/empsit/cpseea05.htm> (last visited December 7, 2021).

<sup>91</sup> Elise Gould & Jori Kandra, Wages grew in 2020 because the bottom fell out of the low-wage labor market, Economic Policy Institute (Feb. 24, 2021), <https://files.epi.org/pdf/219418.pdf>. See also, Michael Dalton et al., The K-Shaped Recovery: Examining the Diverging Fortunes of Workers in the Recovery from the COVID-19 Pandemic using Business and Household Survey Microdata, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Working Paper Series (July 2021), <https://www.bls.gov/osmr/research-papers/2021/pdf/ec210020.pdf>.

<sup>92</sup> Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, Tracking the COVID-19 Recession's Effects on Food, Housing, and Employment Hardships, <https://www.cbpp.org/research/poverty-and-inequality/tracking-the-covid-19-economys-effects-on-food-housing-and> (last visited December 17, 2021).

<sup>80</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, All Employees, Total Nonfarm [PAYEMS], retrieved from FRED, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis; <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/PAYEMS> (last visited December 7, 2021).

<sup>81</sup> *Id.*

<sup>82</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Unemployment Rate [UNRATE], retrieved from FRED, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis; <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/UNRATE> (last visited December 7, 2021).

<sup>83</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *supra* note 80.

<sup>84</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *supra* note 82.

<sup>85</sup> U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, Real Gross Domestic Product [GDPC1], retrieved from FRED, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis; <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/GDPC1> (last visited December 7, 2021).

<sup>86</sup> U.S. Department of the Treasury, Economy Statement by Catherine Wolfgram, Acting Assistant Secretary for Economy Policy, for the Treasury Borrowing Advisory Committee (November 1, 2021), available at <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy0453>.

<sup>87</sup> Yuka Hayashi, IMF Cuts Global Growth Forecast Amid Supply-Chain Disruptions, Pandemic Pressures, Wall Street Journal (October 12, 2021), available at <https://www.wsj.com/articles/imf-cuts-global-growth-forecast-amid-supply-chain-disruptions-warns-of-inflation-risks-11634043601>.

<sup>88</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *supra* note 80.

<sup>89</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Civilian Labor Force Level [CLF16OV], retrieved from FRED,