



THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

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November 18, 2021

TO: BOCES District Superintendents
School District Superintendents
School District Business Officers
Charter School Leaders

FROM: Phyllis D. Morris, Chief Financial Officer

RE:

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the current regional and national challenges with hiring and re
school bus drivers.

Please direct questions to the Office of ESSA-Funded Programs

**Frequently Asked Questions
Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund and
Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) Fund**

Use of Funds for Student Transportation

Listed below are frequently asked questions (FAQs) related to ESSER and GEER information that occurred and are intended to address student needs related to C(s) enrichment activities for students including, for example, based tutoring to address the academic impact of lost instructional time, and other activities that address the social, emotional, mental health, and academic needs of students, students under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and students with transportation to and from such activities who are not eligible for transportation funds.

3. May an SEA or LEA use ESSER or GEER funds to address a shortage of school bus drivers due to the pandemic?

Yes. For example, an LEA may use ESSER or GEER funds for retention bonuses for current bus drivers, for salary increases, or for the cost of hiring additional bus drivers to address the shortage of bus drivers due to the pandemic. Similarly, if an LEA is operating more bus routes due to physical distancing, funds may be used to hire additional bus drivers. In addition, funds may be used to pay for the costs associated with obtaining a commercial driver's license for new bus drivers, including the required training.

4. May an LEA facing a shortage of school bus drivers use ESSER or GEER funds to compensate parents or guardians for transporting their students to and from school?

Yes. ESSER or GEER funds may be used to reimburse parents or guardians for transportation costs or to offer a stipend for transportation costs, as long as they are reasonable and necessary. This type of program may be appropriate to sustain in-person instruction if an LEA is experiencing challenges hiring and/or retaining the school bus drivers necessary to accommodate the LEA's transportation needs.

Before compensating parents or guardians for transportation costs, an LEA must develop clear, objective procedures that, in addition to other relevant factors, consider: the number of days of transportation provided for in-person attendance; documentation of the travel costs to ensure that the compensation is used only for transportation-related expenses; and a process to account for any ESSER or GEER funds that were paid to parents or guardians but not used for transportation costs.