



## The Opportunity

President Biden signed the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA) into law on March 11, 2021. Among its provisions, the bill provides a significant amount of recovery funding to state, local, territorial, and tribal governments.

On May 10, 2021, the Department of the Treasury issued their [Interim Final Rule](#) clarifying the applicable uses for the funding by states and localities. There are five categories of eligible activities:

1. Support public health expenditures.
2. Address negative economic impacts caused by the public health emergency.
3. Replace lost public sector revenue.
4. Provide premium pay for essential workers.
5. Invest in water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure.

In the [fact sheet](#) accompanying the rule, the Treasury also stated that the funding could be used to serve the hardest-hit communities and families. Recipients can allocate funds to address health disparities and the social determinants of health, provide investments in housing and neighborhoods, and address educational disparities and promote healthy childhood environments, if the services are provided to households, areas, or populations that have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.

The interim rule itself also discusses how blood lead screening rates declined during the pandemic, even as children spent more time at home with potential lead hazards, and the Treasury's fact sheet even specifies that lead hazard remediation is one of the eligible services under the above criteria. Replacement of lead service lines is also an eligible expense under this rule.

The high amount of funding, combined with the flexibility afforded to recipients to spend the money and the stated eligibility of lead hazard control, makes this a huge opportunity for states and localities to go above and beyond their current capacity and services to address healthy housing.

## Why Healthy Housing?

States and localities should take this opportunity to invest in healthy housing for the following reasons:

- **It is a serious need and an environmental justice issue.** Nationally, an estimated [35 million homes](#) have serious health and safety hazards, which cause and exacerbate injuries and illness. In the U.S. [every year](#), 24 million people have asthma, 32,500 older adults die from unintentional falls, 21,000 people die from radon-related lung cancer, and 400 people die from unintentional carbon monoxide poisoning. Due to historic and current inequities in housing and health, Black children are more likely to be exposed to lead, more likely to have and die from asthma, and are at an increased risk for injury at home.
- **It is cost-effective.** Research has shown that each dollar invested would result in a return of \$2.03 to [reduce asthma triggers](#) at home, \$1.39 for [lead paint hazard control](#), and \$1.33 for removing [lead service lines](#). In addition, improving housing to address healthy homes issues often has other economic and climate benefits: creating jobs, increasing energy efficiency, and decreasing home utility bills.
- **It aligns with other federal opportunities.** Current and proposed federal budgets have included increased funding for efforts around climate change, infrastructure, and affordable housing. Specifically, the [Office of Lead Hazard Control and Healthy Homes](#) has received record appropriations in recent years, making more funds available for lead hazard control and healthy homes at the local level, including new [Healthy Homes Production Grants](#).

The ARPA funding represents a unique opportunity to invest in healthy housing at the state and local levels. And NCHH is available to help you understand how ARPA funds can have an impact in your community, talk through the opportunities present in your local planning process, and make the case for funding lead poisoning prevention with ARPA funds to policymakers. If you're interested in connecting with NCHH about the ARPA funds or any part of this process, contact Sarah Goodwin at [sgoodwin@nchh.org](mailto:sgoodwin@nchh.org). You can also read more ideas about how ARPA funds can be used our recent blog, "[The American Rescue Plan: A New Opportunity for Healthy Homes Funding.](#)"

