



KAY IVEY
GOVERNOR

KENNETH W. BOSWELL
DIRECTOR

STATE OF ALABAMA

June 17, 2021

Mr. Kelly Butler
Director of Finance
Department of Finance
State Capitol
Montgomery, Alabama 36130

Dear Mr. Butler:

RE: Report on ADECA MOU for CARES Act Coronavirus Relief Funds
ABC for Students Program

The ADECA accounting system has expended \$32,888,252.94 for the ABC for Students program through May 31, 2021. This includes \$3,408,000 expended for the administration of the program. CTC sent an invoice in May for services for January through April in the amount of \$435,987.14. This amount is not included in the total expended noted above but is summarized in the table below. The approved budget for program administration for second semester (January 2021 through June 2021) is \$1.4M. Budget projections for the entire project confirm that program expenditures are expected to be below the \$50M budget.

Please see below the detail of the expenditures and program information for the ABC for Students program as of May 31, 2021:

Invoice #	Description	Amount
007738-1	July 2020	64,515.00
007815-2	August 2020	360,478.60
007984-1	September 2020	552,391.46
008035-1	October 2020	564,667.83
09000-90	November 2020	544,073.00
09001-01	December 2020	760,329.27
007790-2	Mail - Primary/ Secondary tracks	189,393.68
09000-54	Mail – September	208,843.92
09000-89a	Mail – November	163,307.24
Total Invoiced/Paid		3,408,000.00

SIN000170	January - April 2021	435,987.14
Total Administrative To Date		3,843,987.14
Remaining Program Budget		964,012.86

Program Status: Maintenance

The ABC program continues to provide free internet service to more than 200,000 low-income Alabama schoolchildren. While the program is no longer accepting new customers, it will continue to cover monthly service fees for households that enrolled before December 30, 2020 through June 30, 2021. In May, the program has focused almost exclusively on addressing questions and concerns about the transition to the emerging Emergency Broadband Benefit (EBB). ABC Ambassadors also continued to provide customer service to existing ABC customers and to implement a customer satisfaction survey, as detailed below.

Customer Service

The program continues to operate a call center to field customer questions and concerns. From its inception, the ABC Ambassador Center has handled more than 113,589 calls (inbound and outbound). In May, the Center retained 10 Ambassadors to support ABC users in their transition to the EBB (reduced from a high of 34 call center staff). The Ambassador Center continues to operate from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. CT five days a week.

The Center is currently fielding more than 300 (inbound and outbound) calls each day. These include customer service challenges and complaints about lost, missing, or defective devices; calls from previously eligible households that are now seeking to redeem their vouchers; and guidance to customers about applying for the EBB. While ABC Ambassadors cannot complete the application for customers, the team is walking customers through the process. As noted below, we anticipate a growing number of inquiries in the coming weeks once customers are no longer able to receive internet service through ABC.

As call volume has slowed, Ambassadors have also begun to make outbound calls to get feedback about the program through a new [ABC for Students Participant Follow-up Survey \(surveymonkey.com\)](#). Ambassadors are making outbound calls to ABC customers to get their feedback about the program. To date, Ambassadors have completed 350 surveys. We anticipate completing 1,000 surveys before the program concludes at the end of the month.

FCC Emergency Broadband Benefit Program

The ABC team is working to educate ABC customers about alternative low-cost internet options as we look ahead to the conclusion of the ABC for Students program at the end of the month. The EBB offers qualifying households a discount of up to \$50 per month toward broadband service. Because households that are eligible for the National School Lunch Program and all ABC customers participate in the NSLP, all participating ABC households are likewise eligible for the EBB. ABC Program staff have worked closely with ISPs, the Department of Education, schools, and ABC customers to facilitate the transition to the EBB, which will allow eligible households to receive continued discounts through the summer (and perhaps beyond).

ABC Ambassadors continue to provide access to original educational materials about the EBB. These materials include a comprehensive [toolkit](#) for school administrators and [correspondence](#)

with superintendents throughout the state about the EBB. The toolkit included flyers and infographics in English and Spanish for schools to distribute to students and families, a collection of social media posts to promote the program, an audio recording (MP3) (in English and Spanish) to use on local media outlets or robocalls, robocall and SMS scripts for parent outreach, and an explanatory guide to the menu of resources.

In addition to these materials, ABC staff continues to provide guidance and support to the 42 service providers that are participating in the ABC program. ABC staff regularly addresses questions from the ISPs about the relationship between ABC and the EBB and the process for helping customers transition to the new benefit at the end of the month.

Invoicing

As of June 14, 30 providers (more than 70%) have submitted their May invoices to ABC for Students. Absent significant errors, invoices are processed and sent to ADECA within 5 business days. To date, 12 May invoices (totaling approximately \$871,175) have been submitted to the state for approval. All providers have been instructed to submit final invoices no later than July 15 for all services through June 30.

Next Steps and Program Conclusion

ABC for Students concludes on June 30, 2021. ABC staff have developed a variety of resources to communicate about the program's conclusion to stakeholders:

- Later this week, we will send an email to Superintendents to prepare them for next steps
- On June 22, we will send an email to ABC Customers anticipating the conclusion of the ABC program and providing background/ instructions for enrolling in the EBB
- On June 29, we plan to post a variety of Website updates to alert all stakeholders and provide guidance on alternative options.
- ABC staff has been sending weekly Emails to ISPs anticipating the conclusion of the ABC, encouraging ISPs to help ABC customers transition to the EBB, and reminding them of invoice deadlines.

While ABC for Students will no longer provide internet service as of June 30, 2021, we plan to operate the call center through the month of July. We anticipate an increase in call volume and customer service needs at the end of June when service through the program terminates. Despite the communication materials described above, many customers have not internalized the impending deadline. The Ambassador Center will continue to respond to questions and concerns from students, schools, and service providers through the end of July.

Please let us know if there are questions or further information is necessary.

Sincerely,



Kenneth W. Boswell
Director

KWB/tjr