

DWP/MFIP ES POLICY

Date Revised: June 1, 2024

To: MFIP & DWP Employment Service Providers

From: Workforce Solutions Integrated Planning Manager

Subject: Support Service Policy

Purpose: To provide guidance and consistent support services funds across Ramsey County DWP/MFIP employment services providers.

A. Use of Funds

Support service funds are issued to or on behalf of MFIP & DWP participants to support program engagement and promote family stabilization. The information is to help address most types of support requests. However, families experience unique situations will require professional discretion at the agency level.

B. General Guidelines

Budgeting

1. Funds should be identified in the employment service providers support service budget line item and adequately provide for the program needs of the participants. Refer to [Grant Expenditures Policy](#) for funded grant expenditures that are allowed, reported, and approved.

Delivery

2. When resources other than the MFIP funds are available, consider using the other funds first (for example: emergency assistance, financial aid, community resources).
3. Providers are strongly encouraged to distribute funds when in compliance, or to become in compliance, with a valid employment plan. The activities & goals should correspond with the support request.
4. Proof of payment is required for all support services. This may be in the form of a receipt or paid invoice for payments to third parties, and/or a participant signature to acknowledge the receipt of a stored value card from the agency's inventory, such as a gift card/bus/gas card.
5. Issue payments directly to the business (for example, auto repair shop, school, bookstore, uniform store, landlord). On rare occasions, participants may be reimbursed if the expense was pre-approved and a valid receipt is provided.
6. Providers should follow their organizational protocols for authorizations and amounts that would need prior approval.
7. Support funds to participants should not be in the form of cash or Visa/Mastercard gift cards.

Related Expenses

8. Providers are encouraged to consider if the support service is closely related to employment. As an example, paying for a birth certificate required for a child care authorization if child care is instrumental in maintaining employment.

Workforce One & Documenting

9. Support services must be recorded in Workforce One under the services tab, including the type of service, date the transaction took place, and the total amount. Back-up documentation must be included in EDS.
10. Case note support service transactions in Workforce One with the participant needs identified. Include: request, reason why, what it is for, date of request, total amount needed by when and how the payment should be made. Expenditure exceptions made by management should be case noted in Workforce One with rationale of approval or denial.
11. Providers are expected to provide, at a minimum, support service forms/logs to record the request and distribution of support service items, ex: gift cards that include participant WF1 ID, name participant, type of card or payment, card #, date issued, reason for support services & a signature line for the participant and authorized staff member.
12. Support services can be provided in person or via postal mail with completed support service form or other document. Signature on the form can be obtained in any format photo of the signed document, electronically through email, adobe signature, Workforce One Connect, etc. If signature is not obtainable that information in the case note.

Exited MFIP/DWP families under 200% poverty level

13. At the discretion of the provider manager, services can be provided to employed families up to twelve months after they have exited MFIP or DWP Assistance. Use the last month of MFIP/DWP to determine their income eligibility & follow the criteria below. Retention services must start within 30 days of the families last month of MFIP or DWP assistance.
14. At the discretion of the provider manager, support services can be provided for up to two months to unemployed post-MFIP exited participants immediately after they have exhausted the 60 month limit if participant meets the criteria below. The provider manager should ensure a paper or provider electronic file of these expenditures are available for review.

Criteria to serve exited MFIP/DWP families: (applies to #13 & #14)

- Consider this assistance if it would improve or prevent a return to DWP/MFIP
- Sites can only provide *non-assistance* as defined by TANF rules (see section C)
- Sites must meet federal TANF audit standards on verifying & documenting eligibility. Complete **Statement of Income form** as follows: (file in EDS and case note)

For #1 Statement of Income A, if response is “yes” to any of the questions with signature/date they are eligible.

For #2 Statement of Income B. If income is less than or equal to 200% of federal poverty guidelines AND participant has lived in MN for at least 30 days AND one of the remaining responses is “yes” with signature/date, then they are eligible.

C. Assistance & Non-Assistance Definitions

Assistance

On-going basic needs, for instance food, clothing, shelter, utilities, household goods, personal care items, general incidental expenses provided to families who are WORKING.

Childcare & transportation supportive services provided to families who are NOT WORKING.

Assistance expenditures include: payments, vouchers, other forms of benefits designed to meet a family’s on-going basic needs for instance food, clothing, shelter, utilities, household goods, personal care items, general incidental expenses, payments for work experience, community service or a TANF work activity.

Non-Assistance

One time, short-term benefits to families who are NOT WORKING that meet all of the following three criteria:

- Are designed to deal with a specific crisis situation or episode of need
- Are NOT intended to meet recurrent or on-going needs
- Will not extend beyond 4 months

On-going childcare & transportation support services to families who are WORKING.

Non-assistance expenditures include: work subsidies; services such as counseling, case management, peer support, child care information & referral, transitional services, job retention, job advancement; other employment-related services that do not provide basic income support; help applying for SSI.

D. Support Service Categories

CARD REPLACEMENT

Lost or Stolen Cards

- Stored value and other types of non-gas or non-bus cards are not replaceable.

Bus Card Replacement Criteria

- Participants can register each bus card they receive. They will be able to see if a partial replacement is possible from Metro Transit (612-373-3333) or by visiting a Metro Transit Service Center.
- If the card was not registered, proceed as follows:
 - Participant provides a written statement about the loss
 - Employment Counselor submit the statement & other pertinent information to their supervisor for approval
 - Supervisor case note the authorization or denial of the replacement
- Replacement of lost cards are limited to one verified incident in one year.

- Card replacement is based on individual circumstances of each incident.
- Employment Counselor should case note the situation and resolution.

Gas Card Replacement Criteria

- Employment Counselor should determine the serial number of the missing card and contact the card's customer service phone number. If the card has been used, it cannot be replaced.
- If the card has not been used, ask the company to inactivate the card.

TRANSPORTATION

Allocation & Support

- Up to \$150 in a month can be provided to a participant for 31-day bus passes; stored value bus and gas cards, gas vouchers; mileage reimbursement; van pool or ride services*

Documents

- Gas cards: Proof of insurance IS NOT required.
- Mileage: Proof of vehicle ownership (or signed affidavit of participant use by vehicle owner), current insurance coverage, and participant's valid driver's license IS required.

Guidance

- Frequency of distribution is determined by agency.
- Gas cards can be provided to participants who do not have a vehicle or license but rely on other drivers for transportation.
- In a two-parent household, both parents can receive a monthly allocation if they cannot car pool together.
- Refillable bus and gas cards are allowable.
- *Utilize ride services as a last resort in situations when other forms of transportation are not available, based on managers discretion. Issue support in the form of a prepaid card

VEHICLE RELATED

Allocation & Support

- Up to \$1500 total can be authorized in one year for auto repair/maintenance, license tabs, insurance and renewal, replacement or reinstatement of lost driver's license, towing service (if needed as part of auto repair, and not covered by insurance) windshield replacement (if not covered by insurance).
- In a two-parent household, agencies have the option to approve an additional \$1500 for the repair of the second parent's vehicle.

- Providers have the option to exceed the \$1500 limit in unusual circumstances when it will have a positive impact on employment or retention.

Documents

- Proof of vehicle ownership, insurance coverage, and participant's valid driver's license IS required (for auto repair/maintenance, license tabs and insurance).
- A vehicle repair may be approved based on an estimate or invoice.

Guidance

- The provider would issue a check to the automotive shop after the work is completed and when an invoice or bill is provided.
- The repair must be essential to the participant's ability to obtain and retain employment and must have a reasonable chance of extending the vehicles functional life.
- A provider manager can determine whether to repair a vehicle that is on-loan to the participant.
- Prohibited expenses: penalties or fines associated with license reinstatement or cited violations, purchase of new or used vehicle, loan, or lease payments for vehicles.

EMPLOYMENT RELATED

Allocation & Support

- Up to \$600 per participant can be authorized in one year for employment related expenses such as work tools, uniforms, safety shoes, trade license, interview clothing and other work-related expenses, etc.

Documentation

- Receipt of payment or invoice; other verification may be needed based on the specific request.

Guidance

- Self-employment related expenses that are or may be claimed as a business expense by the participant are prohibited. Stored value (e.g.) Target card may be utilized for interview & work clothing.

EDUCATION & TRAINING

Allocation & Support

- Allocation authorized by provider manager based on assessment of need and funding availability. Continuing provision of support services for education should take progress into consideration.
- Assistance should only be considered for training that is not covered by financial aid, such as:
 - Short-term training
 - Costs of GED testing
 - Occupational testing

- Professional license fees
- Driver's education class and/or up to six hours of behind the wheel training

Documentation

- The Employment Counselor can provide the MFIP Education & Training Guide to the participant as a guide in training decision making. This document is not required, however can be used to have a meaningful dialogue. File the document in EDS.
- The school may bill on a monthly, quarterly or semester basis, with provider paying accordingly. The provider should not pay the entire in advance, when possible.

Guidance

- To the extent possible, participant should utilize the WIOA Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) when identifying training providers. These institutions are licensed, registered, or exempt with the state agency that regulates the industry's training. The ETPL can be found at www.mn.gov/deed/careers ▶ Use the data tool ▶ Education ▶ At the bottom of the search check the WIOA certified only box.
- Prohibited expenses: Payment of student loans & education costs that are covered by financial aid

EMERGENCY HOUSING EXPENSES

Allocation & Support

- Up to \$2,000 per participant can be authorized in one year for a non-recurring housing emergency, or to prevent a housing crisis. This can include a security deposit, rent, mortgage payment, furnishings, and utility expenses.

Documentation

- A written request for the support from the participant including: the amount needed, a description of the emergency or episode of need and how expense will be covered in the future or case notes indicating the verbal request needs.
- Statement/Documentation of costs for security deposit/rent/mortgage etc.

Guidance

- Application fees may be paid if participant doesn't have an unlawful detainer (UD) that would prevent the application from moving forward.
- Emergency funds should be provided after other resources are exhausted.
- The provider must issue payment directly to the landlord, mortgage/utility company, etc.
- Guide the participant to inform the financial worker when funds are used.

LAPTOP and TECHNOLOGY EQUIPMENT

Allocation & Support

- The maximum purchase amount is determined by the provider and may be taken on individual need and case-by-case basis. Purchase of laptop, tablet, PC, internet access and specialized software to utilize in education and training or have a documented need for job search, employment, or retention of employment.

Documentation

- Follow the authorization, purchase order & fiscal procedures of provider designated program.
- Employment Counselor will include in Workforce One:
 - Statement from the training organization or employer indicating the equipment or materials are required.
 - Request participant to provide in writing the details and specifications of what is required for training and/or employment.
 - The invoice, purchase order and/or estimated costs of the equipment or materials verification of order.

Guidance

- Verify there are no other sources to fund the technology request.
- Consider using discounted technology equipment and/or specialized software as an option.
- If the needed request is not available for purchase from a used and refurbished vendor or will not be available at the time it is needed, may source the equipment from a provider approved vendor.
- Source software and internet services from provider approved vendors.

INCENTIVES

Allocation & Support

Provider manager establishes “reasonable dollar amount” guidelines. Supervisory approval will be required for incentives over \$100. Eligibility is on a case-by-case basis.

Documentation

- Enter a case note in WF1 indicating incentive, milestone/achievement, date & amount. Subject line should indicate: Incentive.
- Enter incentives in WF1 in support services tab identifying service, date the transaction took place and total amount.

Guidance

- Providers are encouraged to develop & implement a specific plan to issue incentives that will recognize participant engagement and achievement.

- Incentives may be monetary (not cash), or include items such as chocolate, diapers, or donated zoo tickets, etc.
- Federal law prohibits the use of TANF funds for gifts, however incentives are allowed if:
 - The incentive is used to acknowledge benchmarks in the participant’s progress toward self-sufficiency (e.g. when a participant completes a class, obtains a GED, obtains employment, or retains employment for a certain length of time).
 - Benchmark behaviors and achievements are set and made available and consistently applied to all MFIP participants within the agency.
 - Incentives are not provided to pay for participant’s basic needs such as food, shelter, and utilities (e.g. certificates to grocery stores).
 - Incentives are not used to replace support service dollars for other allowable items such as expenses to find or accept employment, or to resolve a shelter crisis.

BASIC NEEDS

Allocation & Support

Agencies may use support services funds to cover the cost of basic needs to resolve a short-term episode of need that will last fewer than four months. Items may include: essential household goods, clothing, personal care items, etc. Participant may receive up to \$100 per month up to 4 months. Supervisory approval will be required for basic needs more than \$100. Manager’s assessment of the need and funding available and case by case situation.

Documentation

- Statement from participant that includes description of needs and support.
- Case note in WF1 reason, date & amount. Subject line should indicate: Basic Needs

Guidance

- Basic Needs are Non-Assistance expenses, an episode of need must be identified as part of the approval. If the need will not be resolved by approval of the support or is expected to last longer than four months, connect the participant to external resources for ongoing assistance.
- Supports should be approved on an individual basis. Agencies should not use support services to purchase basic personal care items for all participants.

CHILDCARE

Allocation & Support

Agencies may use support services funds to cover short-term, non-recurring childcare costs meant to deal with a specific crisis situation or episode of need that will end when CCAP is approved and that is not expected to extend beyond four months. Eligibility is case by case basis.

Documentation

- A completed CCAP application and childcare transmittal, including the participant's choice of provider
- Proof of Activity Verification/statement why childcare is requested

Guidance

- Do not use funds to cover the cost of childcare if the participant refused to complete a CCAP application or for times when a second parent on the case is available to provide care.
- When reviewing a request for childcare support, consider the urgency of the need and all other options available to the participant.
- MFIP support services funds should be used as a last resort to cover childcare costs.