

TANF Policy 06 – Supportive Services

I. DEFINITION

Supportive Services enable a participant, who cannot afford to pay for such services, to participate in activities authorized by the TANF Program.

The term Supportive Services may be used interchangeably with the term Direct Benefits, but would not be the same as incentives.

The E&T Provider will provide transportation assistance to every unemployed client who is required to participate. This can be in the form of bus passes or gas cards. Once employed, the continuation of this assistance should be evaluated on an individual basis.

The award of supportive services to participants is a requirement of the TANF E & T provider. Services under the amount of \$250 do not require prior approval. The provider must ensure each individual supportive service cost:

- Is reasonable – both in cost and the item being purchased
- Is necessary to participate with TANF, or to obtain or maintain employment
- Is the last resort:
 - Participant cannot afford to pay for the expense
 - No other resources are available (family, community, other agencies)
- Is a required item (and not a “nice to have” item) when assisting with payment of tools, books, and supplies, etc.
- The need and rationale for the supportive service must be fully documented in the case notes section of the Participant’s file.
- Every supportive service requires official documentation and client acknowledgement of receipt.

II. SUPPORTIVE SERVICE GUIDANCE

1. Anything over the amount of \$250 requires DOL approval in writing.
2. Utility and housing concerns should be referred to DSS Housing Stabilization Unit for services.
3. Substance abuse and mental health concerns should be referred to Bridge.
4. Car repairs are only covered when the car is legally owned by the client and the client has a valid driver’s license and insurance.
5. Supportive service payments should be last resort.
6. Providers should gain approval before providing supportive service payments that are associated with standard living expenses, such as insurance premiums, utility payments, or rent payments. Although such payments are not strictly prohibited, providers must fully support such payments as reasonable and necessary for the client to participate and that no other funds or assistance is available to provide these services.

III. SUPPORTIVE SERVICE PROHIBITIONS

1. Payment toward goods or services incurred or received prior to the participant's enrollment is prohibited.
2. Bad debts cannot be paid with TANF funds; debts meet this definition at the point they are turned over to a collection agency for further action.
3. Interest expense cannot be paid with TANF resources. Revolving credit payments or other periodic loan payments normally comprised of both interest and principal.
4. The purchase of goods or services that are illegal under any federal, state, local, or municipal law or statute cannot be made with TANF funds.
5. The purchase of cigarettes, alcoholic beverages or firearms is prohibited.
6. TANF funds may not be used for foreign travel or training.
7. TANF funds may not be used for Entertainment (movie tickets, amusement parks, etc.) with one exception: Costs that would be considered entertainment are allowable only if it is in the Contractor's written incentive plan tied directly to a program outcome such as credential attainment, job placement/retention, or post-secondary enrollment/retention. All entertainment costs require approval by DET prior to purchase.

IV. COMMON SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

1. Transportation: Transportation expenses may be provided for participants to attend training, conduct job search, or for employment. Automotive repairs can be an acceptable supportive service only if car being repaired is registered to client.
2. Tools, Books, and Supplies: Items included as part of, and are necessary for participation in training, may be purchased with Supportive Service funds. Such purchases must be a requirement of training; items that are recommended by an instructor but not required for every student are not normally supported with Supportive Service funds. This is also true for training activities such as on-the-job training, internships, etc. If the training site requires that a trainee have uniforms, tools, etc., and does not provide such items for regular, employees or trainees, Supportive Service funds may be utilized. Unusual or compelling circumstances may support an exception to this rule.
3. Purchase of Care Plus – Additional fee charged by Day Care Center in addition to POC payment. Provider is responsible for ensuring no other feasible options are available.