

TO: Workforce Investment Board

DATE: 03/11/04

FROM: WIB Executive Committee

For Action

For Information

For Discussion

SUBJECT: Revision to Supportive Services Policy

PROPOSED MOTION(S): Approve revised Supportive Services Policy to ensure time sensitive compliance with WIA directives.

DISCUSSION: The Supportive Services Policy has been modified in three areas. The amounts available for supportive services for Merced College Licensed Vocational and Registered Nursing Program participants have been increased by approximately \$300 to reflect increased costs. Additionally, new wording has been added to define the maximum Flexible Account limits for cross-referral participants.

The maximum limits for a participant's Flexible Benefits account will be:

- 1. Enrolled in Licensed Vocational Nursing program at Merced College - \$1,764.**
- 2. Enrolled in Registered Nursing program at Merced College - \$3,051.**
- 3. Enrolled in a full-time training activity with a training provider, not on the ETPL, known as a cross-referral. The amount will not exceed the actual costs associated with the training such as books, uniforms, supplies, fees such as health and parking but in no case will it exceed the maximum amount of \$1,000 nor will it pay for such items as registration or tuition. A cross-referral will also be eligible for the actual calculated costs for additional services such as child-care and transportation but in no case will it exceed the maximum amount of \$1,500.**

ATTACHMENT(S): Supportive Services Policy

DEPARTMENT OF WORKFORCE INVESTMENT

Policy/Procedure For Supportive Services

Policy: Effective January 26, 2004, participants may be provided supportive services using the criteria stated in this policy.

Section 1 - General Provisions

The Merced County Workforce Investment Board (WIB), through the Merced County Department of Workforce Investment (WI), will make available supportive services to appropriate Workforce Investment Act (WIA) participants. All requests for participant supportive services and all collaborating information detailing the need will be documented in the Individual Employment Plan and/or the participant's diary. To the best of its ability, the Department of Workforce Investment ensures that:

- Services provided under this policy are necessary to enable participants to participate in activities authorized under Title I of WIA;
- Services provided do not duplicate services available from other sources and are coordinated with the services and resources of the One-Stop partners and other community service partners;
- Financial assistance does not include post-exit services;
- Bonus and incentive payments, if provided, are based on the attendance and performance by the participants receiving them;
- To the extent possible, similarly situated participants receive similar services;
- The Workforce Investment Area will meet applicable Internal Revenue Service and Fair Labor Standards Act requirements; and
- Needs-related supportive services are based on the program activity in which an individual is enrolled and the ongoing assessment related to the participant, such information to be documented in the Individual Employment Plan.
- Provision of supportive services under this policy is contingent upon WIA funds availability. Additionally, at the discretion of the Local WIB this Supportive Services Policy is subject to review and change.

Supportive services will be provided through a Flexible Benefit Account for each eligible participant. The Flexible Benefit Account is a maximum amount of dollars available to each eligible participant, based on the daily allowance for transportation and child care and/or the actual cost of other services provided, to offset any authorized supportive service needs for which the participant is eligible, as agreed to, and documented by, an Employment and Training Specialist. Each eligible participant may select how their

allocation will be used to assist them during training and or job search activities. At no time will a participant's use of any one service, or combination of services, exceed the total amount of money available in his or her Flexible Benefit Account.

The maximum limits for a participant's Flexible Benefit Account are:

- Enrolled in Core B/Intensive services - \$150.
- Enrolled in a full time training activity (as defined by the training provider) - \$1,500. (Note: this allowance is not authorized for the LVN and RN programs at Merced College).
- Enrolled in Licensed Vocational Nursing program at Merced College, whether a cross referral or under contract – \$1,764.
- Enrolled in Registered Nursing Program at Merced College, whether a cross referral or under contract – \$3,051.
- Enrolled in a full-time training activity with a training provider, not on the ETPL, known as a cross-referral. The amount will not exceed the actual costs associated with the training such as books, uniforms, supplies, fees such as health and parking but in no case will it exceed the maximum amount of \$1,000 nor will it pay for such items as registration or tuition. A cross-referral will also be eligible for the actual calculated costs for additional services such as child-care and transportation but in no case will it exceed the maximum amount of \$1,500.

Exceptions may be made to this policy, on a case-by-case basis, should individual circumstances warrant exception and are documented in the case diary by an Employment and Training Specialist.

Section 2 – Supportive Services

The Department of Workforce Investment, in accordance with the Workforce Investment Act and its implementing regulations, will provide supportive services deemed appropriate for payment or reimbursement to participants and/or other agencies or businesses for pre-approved necessary services, equipment and/or materials provided to the participant. Such services, equipment and/or materials may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Transportation ¹
- Childcare ²
- Placement Incentives ³
- DMV printouts;
- Physicals;
- Tools;
- Uniforms/shoes/boots;
- Immunizations;
- Testing costs;
- Fees;
- Licensing or endorsements;
- Application fees;

- Haircuts;
- Work clothes.

¹ In-county residents attending out-of-county full-time training, and in-county residents with a round trip commute of 50 miles or more (including to and from child care provider) to attend in-county full time training, are eligible to be reimbursed at the rate of \$10 per day (daily attendance for training to be verified by training provider). For those individuals who reside within 50 miles of training, issuance of bus passes are authorized. The Internet website Map Quest, or similar site will be used to verify mileage. Also, participants who are eligible to receive a transportation allowance must provide proof of driver's license, vehicle registration and insurance.

² Participants with a child 12 years of age or younger may be eligible for childcare. Participants with a child 13 through 18 years of age may be eligible for childcare if the child is physically or mentally incapable of caring for him or herself, as determined by a legally qualified professional, or who is under court supervision. If the participant's spouse or significant other is neither working, looking for work, nor in a training program and is not incapacitated or does not have special needs, childcare is not authorized. Participants qualifying for childcare will be reimbursed at the rate of \$15.00 per day, regardless of the number of qualifying children. Documentation for reimbursement for childcare is the participant's time and attendance for days in training, furnished by the training provider. Referrals to Children's Services Network will be made for those participant's that appear to be eligible for childcare services through Children's Services Network.

³ A participant who has successfully completed their enrollment component and has entered full time employment is eligible for the placement incentive of \$25.00 cash payment. Verification from the employer is required to qualify, and there must be adequate money in the participant's Flexible Benefit Account to cover the cost of the incentive.

Needs-Related / Incidental Payments will not be authorized for this program year.

Participants who obtain unsubsidized employment shall have their Supportive Services (Flexible Benefit Account) reduced or terminated as of the date of their employment, unless they can show proof that such reduction would create a hardship upon them. The participant's needs will be reassessed to determine if further assistance from WIA funding is required.

An Employment and Training Specialist, in collaboration with the participant, will develop a plan for services, equipment and/or materials that are typical for a participant's area of training, job search, and/or program activity.

Section 3 – Merced College Licensed Vocational Nursing Program Participants

Participants enrolled in the Merced College Licensed Vocational Nursing program are eligible for a Flexible Benefit Account that is for direct training support only, as per the

attached list⁴, and excludes transportation and child care. The individual Flexible Benefit Account limit for each participant enrolled in the Merced College Licensed Vocational Nursing program is \$1,763.95

Section 4 – Merced College Registered Nursing Program Participants

Participants enrolled in the Merced College Registered Nursing program are eligible for a Flexible Benefit Account that is for direct training support only, as per the attached list⁵, and excludes transportation and child care. The individual Flexible Benefit Account limit for each participant enrolled in the Merced College Registered Nursing program is \$3,050.72.

Section 5 – Pell Grants

Participants enrolled or accepted for enrollment at an accredited college, in a course of study eligible for federal or State financial aid and, leading to the award of a professional certificate, degree, etc., must apply for a federal Pell Grant. No Supportive Services will be provided until this action is accomplished, as verified by a copy of the Pell Grant application or award letter. Any other grants, which the participant has applied for, must also be verified. Copies of the verification documents will be maintained in the participant's file.

Note. Preliminary Pell Grant eligibility can be established prior to enrollment into a training program. The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form is used to determine eligibility and is available through the Internet or the financial-aid offices of accredited colleges. Applications can be submitted on-line through the One-Stop. One-Stop counselors will be familiar with the proper completion procedures for these forms and be able to assist customers in the filing process. Pell Grants are awarded only once in a program year, and only for one academic institution. The maximum award amount for the 2003/2004-program year is \$4,050 per student.

For WIA participants enrolled in the RN and LVN programs at Merced College, Supportive Services may be provided while a Pell Grant application is pending. Supportive Services for these programs will not exceed the established funding limits. Expenditures for Supportive Services will be tracked through the Department's fiscal client database.

On a monthly basis, case managers will coordinate with Merced College's Financial Aid Office – through Ms. Karyn Wiens, Director, Employer-Focused Training Center (ETC) #722-5090 - regarding the status of their clients' Pell Grant applications. Note. Merced College publishes a Student Financial-Aid Report that documents the status of Pell and other grant applications. The report also details the amounts and disposition of any grants awarded. These reports are provided to the One-Stop (Employment Resource Center) on a semester basis.

Upon award of a Pell Grant, full or partial, the participant's Supportive Services (Flexible Benefit Account) may be reduced or terminated. The participants "needs" will be reassessed and documented to determine the appropriate level of assistance from WIA funding.

⁴ List to be verified with Merced College at the beginning of each semester, and adjustments made to the list, and LVN flexible benefit account limit, as necessary.

⁵ List to be verified with Merced College at the beginning of each semester, and adjustments made to the list, and the RN flexible benefit account limit, as necessary.

Section 6 - ITA's, Limitations of Financial Support

For those clients who elect to attend occupational classroom training within the local labor market area (defined as from Fresno County to the South to Stanislaus County to the North), the maximum amount of funds available will be limited to the needs identified in the Individual Employment Plan and be consistent with the criteria set forth in this policy.

The Department of Workforce Investment will make no Supportive Services available to clients who elect to attend occupational classroom training outside of the defined labor market area.

For those clients who must attend occupational classroom training outside of the defined local labor market area because there are no providers of the training within the local area, the provisions set forth in this policy (electing to attend within the local labor market area) will apply.