

TO: Executive Committee

DATE: 08/06/07

FROM: WIB Staff

For Action

For Information

For Discussion

SUBJECT: Supportive Services Policy

PROPOSED MOTION(S): Approve Revised Supportive Services Policy

DISCUSSION: The Supportive Services Policy is in need of revision, largely because of a continuing reduction of allocated funding. Following are proposed revisions:

- 1) Elimination of Retention Needs supportive services.**
- 2) Procedural change to use computers, rather than manually tracking the Customer Financial Form.**

The Supportive Services Policy was last reviewed October 2, 2006.

ATTACHMENT(S):

Supportive Services Policy

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Policy/Procedure For Supportive Services

Policy: Effective **August 7, 2007**, participants may be provided supportive services using the criteria stated in this policy.

Section I – 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 **dependent upon WIA funding**. All requests for participant supportive services and all collaborating information detailing the **need** will be documented in the Individual Employment Plan and/or in the participant's diary. To the best of its ability, the Department of Workforce Investment will ensure:

- Provisions of supportive services under this policy are contingent upon the WIA funds available. Additionally, at the discretion of the local WIB, this Supportive Services Policy is subject to review and change.
- 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.

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 a combination of services, exceed the total amount of money available in his or her Flexible Benefit Account.

- **Enrollment in Core B Intensive Job Search, Pre-employment Related Services or Employment Specific Services - \$100.**

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- Enrollment in a full-time activity (as defined by the training provider) – \$2,200. This allowance may not be authorized for the LVN and/or RN programs at Merced College, dependent on WIA funding availability.
- Enrollment in a full time training activity with a training provider not on the Eligible Training Provider List (such an enrollment is known locally as a “cross-referral”):
 - A. \$1000, - This money is available to the client only for the actual costs associated with the training such as books, uniforms, supplies and fees, such as health and parking. In no instance may any portion of this money be used for registration or tuition costs.
 - B. \$2,200 – Enrollment in a full-time training activity.

Exceptions may be made to this policy on a case-by case basis should individual circumstances warrant exception, and are to be 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:

- Transportation¹
- Childcare²
- DMV Printouts; Physicals;

Needs-Related/Incidental Payments **are not authorized.**

¹ In-county residents attending out-of-county full-time training, and in-county residents with a round trip of 20-49 miles or 50 plus miles as verified by Map Quest or a similar website (including to and from childcare provider to attend in-county full-time training) are eligible to be reimbursed (daily attendance will be verified by the training provider). The rate of reimbursement varies: 20 – 49 miles roundtrip, \$5.00 per day; 50 plus miles roundtrip, \$10 per day. Bus passes are available to those participants whose schedule and childcare arrangements can be accommodated by public transportation. 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, if the child is under court supervision. If the participant’s spouse or significant other is either not working nor looking for work, nor participating 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 for childcare at the rate of up to \$20.00 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, to be furnished by the training provider. **When childcare is provided, the length and number of days of training, number of children, age(s), hours per day childcare is required, and the childcare provider need to be documented in the Individual Employment Plan/Diary.**

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Participants who obtain unsubsidized employment may have their Supportive Services (Flexible Benefit Account) reduced or terminated. 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-Pell Grants

Participants enrolled or accepted for enrollment at an accredited college in a course of study eligible for Federal or State financial aid, which will lead 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 amount for the Pell Grant will vary from year to year.

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. Expenditures for supportive services will be tracked through the Department's fiscal client database.

Case managers will utilize their monthly contact with the participant to verify the status of the PELL Grant application. Note: Merced College publishes a Student Financial Aid Report which 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 participant's needs will be reassessed and documented to determine appropriate level of assistance from WIA funding.

Section 4 – ITA's, Limitations of Financial Support

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

The Department of Workforce Investment will make no supportive services available to participants who elect to attend occupational classroom training outside of the defined labor market area.

For those customers who must attend occupational classroom training outside 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.

Procedure: The Employment and Training Specialist will thoroughly interview each participant and ask appropriate questions relevant to the level of assistance the participant requires. The Employment and Training Specialist will prepare a plan of services that will be based on the individual's needs and what he/she is eligible for to successfully complete training. The Employment and Training Specialist, in collaboration with the participant, will prepare all supportive services obligations. Backup documentation is required in the file to support the need for the supportive services and the exact amount and type of services(s) provided. For example:

When mileage is provided, the following must be kept in the participant's file: 1) a copy of the participant's valid CA Driver's License, 2) proof of insurance for the vehicle to be driven, 3) vehicle registration, and 4) a validated map of the commute to and from training.

Employment & Training Specialists will review the plan of participant services with their supervisor, either individually or during a staffing session, at which time verbal approval/denial/modification will be given by the supervisor (Manager). The E & T Specialist will complete the Customer Financial Form (CFF) and **submit** it electronically to MIS, and a copy of the CCF **will be forwarded** to the Supervisor/Manager. **Upon acceptance by MIS, the client obligation (or CFF)** will be logged into the web-based obligations database used to manage funding resources in the various grants.

Procedure for Approving Exceptions to Supportive Service Limits

Employment and Training Specialists will prepare the file to request an exception to the ITA or supportive services limits and present the file with all supporting documentation of need to the Supervising Employment Training Specialist/Manager for review and concurrence. Upon approval by the Program Manager the request will be sent forward to MIS with supporting documentation for processing according to the CFF. The Program Manager will review and ensure that funds are available prior to approval.

Responsible Official: Special Projects Manager

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Revised/Reviewed: August 6, 2007