

**TO: Program Planning and Development**

**DATE: 11/30/05**

**FROM: WIB Staff**

**For Action**

**For Information**

**For Discussion**

**SUBJECT: Supportive Services Policy**

**PROPOSED MOTION(S): Accept the new Supportive Services Policy and forward to the Workforce Investment Board for approval.**

**DISCUSSION: The Supportive Services Policy is in need of revision, largely because of rises in the costs of the services offered. The following are proposed revisions:**

- **Raise the amount available for participants enrolled in Core B/Intensive Services from \$150 to \$300. Revision adds an Employment and Retention Supportive Service payment after employment of \$50 at 90 days, \$50 at 180 days and \$50 at 270 days.**
- **Raises the amount for participants enrolled in a full time activity from \$1,500 to \$2,200.**
- **Changes the rate of transportation reimbursement. Delineates shorter trip rate (20-49 miles roundtrip) at \$5.00 per day from longer trips (50 miles plus) at \$10.00 per day.**
- **Raises the rate of reimbursement for childcare from \$15 to \$20 per day.**
- **Changes the verification of Pell Grant status from the College's Financial Aid Officer to the participant.**

**ATTACHMENT(S): Revised Supportive Services Policy**

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## **Supportive Services**

Policy: Effective upon approval by the Executive Committee, 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. 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 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.
- Provisions of supportive services under this policy is contingent upon WIA funds available. 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 participants. 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.

- Enrolled in Core B/Intensive Services- \$300 (\$150 Supportive Services Initial Employment; \$150 Employment & Retention Supportive Service payments \$50 at 90 days; \$50 at 180 days; \$50 at 270 days). Note: Employment at the same or a different employer does not need to be promotional).
- Enrolled in a full time activity (as defined by the training provider) - \$2200

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(Note: this allowance may not be authorized for the LVN and RN programs at Merced College depending upon WIA funding.

- 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 \$1000 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 of \$2200.

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 <sup>1</sup>
- Childcare<sup>2</sup>
- Employment/Retention Needs<sup>3</sup>
- DMV Printouts; Physicals;
- Tools; Uniforms/shoes/boots; Work clothes
- Immunizations;

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<sup>1</sup> 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 provide) to attend in-county full time training, are eligible to be reimburse (daily attendance will be verified by training provider). 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 arrangement can be accommodated by public transportation. Also, participants who are eligible to receive transportation allowance must provide proof of driver’s license, vehicle registration and insurance.

<sup>2</sup> 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 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 **\$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, furnished by the training provider.

<sup>3</sup> A participant who has successfully completed their enrollment component and has entered full-time employment is eligible for a needs related supportive service of \$50. An additional \$50 may be provided at the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2 quarter of employment to assist the participant in needs related to retaining their employment.

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- Testing Cost, Fees, Licensing or endorsements;
- Application Fees; haircuts.

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

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 participants' are 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 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. An 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 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

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reassessed and documented to determine appropriate level of assistance from WIA funding.

### **Section 4 – ITA’s, Limitations of Financial Support**

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 need 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 that will support the need for the supportive services and the exact amount and type of services(s) provided. For example:

When childcare is provided, the length and number of days of training, number of children, age(s), hours per day childcare is required and childcare provider need to be listed in the Individual Employment Plan/Diary.

When mileage is provided, there must be a copy of a map kept in the participant file from the Internet such as Mapquest, validating the mileage and that it is over 20 or 50 miles round trip per day commute. The participant will provide documentation that they have a valid CA Driver’s License and insurance with a copy in the participant file

Employment & Training Specialists will review the plan of services for the participant 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 and send it electronically to MIS. A copy of the CCF will go to the Supervisor/Manager to 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**

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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.