

**TO: Executive Committee**

**DATE: 04/06/09**

**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 was last modified October 2, 2006, and is in need of revision. In anticipation of the pending funding increases and the requirements provided by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), there is a need to redefine internal procedures in order to provide supportive services to our customers. Also included in the revision are increases in the amount of money being made available to participants for core, intensive and training supportive services. There is also a reintroduction of “needs-based payments.” Needs-based payments have not been available for the past several years. These payments would be issued to participants that would otherwise not have the means to pay living or incidental expenses while receiving training.

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



**Andrea T. Baker**  
*Director*

**Joanne Presnell**  
*Assistant Director*

**DEPARTMENT OF  
WORKFORCE INVESTMENT**

**Policy/Procedure  
For  
Supportive Services**

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Equal Opportunity Employer

**Policy:** Effective **April 6, 2009**, customers 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) customers dependent upon WIA funding. All requests for customer supportive services and all collaborating information detailing the need will be documented in the Individual Employment Plan and/or in the customer's diary. Provisions of supportive services under this policy are contingent upon the availability of WIA funds. Additionally, at the discretion of the local WIB, this Supportive Services Policy is subject to review and change. The Department of WI will ensure:

- Services provided under this policy are based on the needs of the customer;
- Services provided under this policy are available after all other resources have been exhausted;
- Services provided under this policy are necessary to enable customers 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, when allowable by law and if provided, are based on the attendance and performance by the customers receiving them;
- To the extent possible, similarly situated customers receive similar services;
- The Workforce Investment Area will meet applicable Internal Revenue Service and Fair Labor Standards Act requirements; and
- Needs-based/related supportive services are based on the program activity in which an individual is enrolled and the ongoing assessment related to the customer. Such information to be documented in the Individual Employment Plan.

Supportive services will be provided through a Flexible Benefit Account for each eligible customer. The Flexible Benefit Account is a maximum amount of dollars available to each eligible customer, based on the daily allowance for transportation and childcare and/or the actual cost of other services provided, to offset any authorized supportive service needs for which the customer is eligible, as agreed to, and documented, by an Employment and Training Specialist. Each eligible customer may select how their allocation will be used to assist them during training and/or job search activities. At no time, will a customer'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.

### **Core B Services:**

- Enrollment in Core B Intensive Job Search, Preemployment Related Services or Employment Specific Services - \$250. Employment and Training Specialists are authorized to spend up to \$250 without a manager's approval. For purchases that exceed \$250, a supervisor/manager's authorization is needed. This includes the Customer Reimbursement Form and Vendor Notification of Authorization to Purchase.

### **Intensive and Training Services:**

- Enrollment in a full-time training activity(as defined by the training provider), and is listed on the State Eligible Training Provider List:
  - Up to \$4680, this may include transportation and childcare, dependent on the need of the customer and WIA funding availability.
  - This allowance may not be authorized for customers receiving supportive services through the LVN Program that is sponsored by the Department of Labor grant.
- Enrollment in a full-time training activity with a training provider not on the Eligible Training Provider List:
  - Up to \$6,000, this may include transportation and childcare dependent on the need of the customer and WIA funding availability.
  - To include 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.
  - This allowance may not be authorized for customers receiving supportive services through the LVN Program that is sponsored by the Department of Labor grant.

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 and approved by a supervisor/manager.

## **Section 2- Supportive Services**

The Dept of WI, in accordance with the Workforce Investment Act and its implementing regulations, will provide supportive services deemed appropriate for payment or reimbursement to customers and/or other agencies or businesses for preapproved necessary services, equipment and/or materials provided to the customer. Such services, equipment and/or materials may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- DMV printouts.
- Physicals when required for training or employment.
- One-time GED Testing Fee as part of the Individual Employment Plan.
- Transportation<sup>1</sup> maximum of \$1560.
- Childcare<sup>2</sup> maximum of \$2080.

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<sup>1</sup> Customers attending training are eligible based on need for mileage reimbursement. Mileage must be verified by Map Quest or a similar website (including to and from childcare provider to attend in-county full-time training) daily attendance will be verified by the training provider. The rate of reimbursement varies: 10-19 miles roundtrip, \$5.00 per day; 20-49 miles roundtrip, \$7.50 per day; 50-74 miles roundtrip, \$15 per day; 75-99 miles roundtrip, \$17.50 per day; 100+ roundtrip, \$20.00 per day. Bus passes are available to those customers whose schedule and childcare arrangements can be accommodated by public transportation. Also, customers who are eligible to receive a transportation allowance must provide proof of driver's license, vehicle registration and insurance.

<sup>2</sup> Customers with a child 12 years of age or younger may be eligible for childcare. Customers 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 customer'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

- One-time Emergency Assistance for training or employment
- Needs Based/Related Incidental Payments up to \$10 per day<sup>3</sup>, a maximum \$1,000.

Customers who obtain unsubsidized employment may have their supportive services (Flexible Benefit Account) reduced or terminated. The needs of the customer will be reassessed to determine if further assistance from WIA funding is required.

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

### **Section 3-Pell Grants**

Customers enrolled or accepted for enrollment at an accredited college in a course of study eligible for Federal or State financial aid 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. Pell Grant recipients must reapply each year to continue supportive services. Any other grants that the customer has applied for must also be verified. Copies of the verification documents will be maintained in the customer'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 specialists 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 customers enrolled in programs at a 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.

One-Stop Specialists will utilize their monthly contact with the customer 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.

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needs, childcare will not be authorized. Customers 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 customer'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.

<sup>3</sup> Needs-related payments provide financial assistance to participants for the purpose of enabling individuals to participate in training and are one of the supportive services authorized by WIA section 134(e)(3). Adult/DW must be (a)unemployed, (b)not qualify for, or have ceased qualifying for, unemployment compensation and enrolled in training services under WIA by the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> week. For Adults the amount of funds cannot exceed the poverty levels for the equivalent period. For DW the amounts can not exceed the weekly level of UI benefits. The amount of \$10 a day times the number of days in training can be determined by the Employment & Training Specialist. Any additional Needs Based/Related Incidental Payments or One-time Emergency Assistance needs to be authorized by a supervisor or manager.

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

#### **Section 4 – ITAs, Limitations of Financial Support**

For those customers 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 Dept of WI will make no supportive services available to customers who elect to attend occupational classroom training outside of the defined labor market area, unless there are no training providers within the local Labor market Area.

**Procedure:** The Employment and Training Specialist will thoroughly interview each customer and ask appropriate questions relevant to the level of assistance the customer 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 customer, 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 customer's file: 1) a copy of the customer's valid CA Driver's License, 2) proof of insurance for the vehicle to be driven, 3) vehicle registration, and 4) a map, from a known source; i.e., Mapquest, of the commute to and from training.

Employment and Training Specialists will review the plan of customer 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 Employment and Training 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 Supervising Employment Training Specialist/Manager the request will be sent forward to MIS with supporting documentation for processing according to the CFF. Supervising Employment Training Specialist/Manager will review and ensure that funds are available prior to approval.

**Responsible Official:** Training Supervisor/Manager

**Reviewed Date:** March 1, 2009

**Revised Date:** March 1, 2009