



WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS of the Coastal Bend

POLICY

CATEGORY:	Program Operations	No: 4.0.101.07
TITLE:	Support Services	
SUPERSEDES:	4.0.101.06, dated March 1, 2013	
EFFECTIVE:	October 31, 2014	
BOARD APPROVAL:	October 30, 2014	
DATE OF LAST REVIEW:	October 30, 2014	

I. PURPOSE:

This policy provides guidelines to be followed in administering support services for all Board programs. These guidelines are intended to ensure consistency and fiscal accountability for the management of workforce services and programs.

II. DEFINITIONS:

Reasonable costs – A cost is reasonable if, in its nature and amount, it does not exceed that which would be incurred by a prudent person under the circumstance prevailing at the time the decision was made to incur the cost. The question of reasonableness is particularly important when governmental units or components are predominately federally-funded.

III. POLICY STATEMENT:

General

Support Services are to be used as a means to assist individuals in obtaining employment and are solely intended for that purpose. All expenses must be reasonable and necessary to assist a participant in achieving the goals of his or her Individual Employment Plan (IEP). Support services are provided to individuals who have barriers to education and training, obtaining, retaining, or advancing in employment, and who require additional assistance to enable them to participate in work-related activities. Provision of services is subject to availability of resources and funding. Support services are coordinated with the employer, when appropriate.

Support services may be provided to eligible and active job seekers enrolled in workforce programs or other special initiatives such as Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Intensive or Training Services, Choices for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training (SNAP E&T), and Non-Custodial Parent (NCP) Choices programs.

The need for support services shall be determined by an ongoing assessment with a support services plan that addresses the need(s), referrals for community services, activities for which the support service is being provided, an estimate of the amount of total funds needed, and the length of time support services will be provided.

Requests for support services shall require a budget worksheet depicting the current financial situation of the individual and shall include an assessment of all financial resources available to the individual including, but not limited to; Pell grants, student loans, scholarships, household income, Medicaid, SNAP E&T, and other sources of assistance.

A Support Service designated as a One-Time Expense is defined as a single payment/purchase, no greater than the established maximum amount, and received once in a twelve month period.

Resource and Service Coordination

Board funds will be considered a last resource for providing support services. Contracted Service Providers must ensure that support services are not available through other agencies and that they are necessary for the individual to participate in Board funded programs. The Contracted Service Provider must establish linkages for referrals to other community partners prior to using program funds. The Contracted Service Provider must establish procedures addressing coordination with other entities to ensure non-duplication of resources and services and follow up that individual needs were met.

Contracted Service Providers will maintain a complete up-to-date list of services available in the community and make the list available to all individuals. Referrals are to be made, as determined appropriate, to include low-income housing, application for Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) benefits, low-cost medical assistance, substance abuse treatment, vocational or physical rehabilitation, and other needed services.

Allowable Support Services

The Support Services limits on amounts and duration allowable by the Board are found as an attachment to the policy. This includes limitations on co-enrolled TAA and WIA Dislocated worker – funded support services as per WD letters referenced in Section V – Related Policy Information.

Car Repairs - Car repairs will be approved only for repairs that would allow a vehicle to be operable and safe to drive. Repairs may include: replacing worn out tires, brakes, batteries, and other essential parts. A guideline to consider in evaluating these repairs is those that are essential for passing a vehicle state inspection. Additionally, one-time maintenance checks for oil and filter change or wheel alignments may also be allowed. Included also under allowable repairs is a diagnostic check for the evaluation of the repairs that are needed and towing charges, if the vehicle is inoperable. The towing charge may be deducted from the actual repairs if the towing is provided from the same vendor or garage conducting the diagnostic check.

Vehicle repairs are not intended for major repairs such as: replacing air conditioning compressors or major engine/transmission overhauls.

The following rules will be adhered to in request for approval of payment(s) for vehicle repairs:

- Documentation from a vendor that repairs requested are needed for the vehicle to be operable and safe;
- Verification of ownership of vehicle;
- Prepayment is prohibited;
- Payment will be paid directly to vendor after completion of repairs and receipt of invoice;

- Procurement of car repairs will require three (3) written bids; and
- Proof of issuance of current auto insurance

If the vehicle is owned by another individual, the following safeguards must be in place:

- Before inclusion of the vehicle's use in an IEP, a signed statement indicating that the participant has use of the vehicle for employment-related purposes, along with a copy of supporting ownership documentation, must be provided; and
- Before repairing a third-party vehicle, a hold harmless agreement or other protection is signed by the vehicle owner and maintained in the participant's case file.
- Proof of issuance of current auto insurance for owner of vehicle and participant

Certificate of General Equivalence (GED) Testing Payments – The cost of GED testing and certificate is paid through direct payments to the GED test centers and the Texas Education Agency (TEA). Prior to approval of payment, verification will be obtained from the educational provider that the individual is ready for testing.

Child Care - Child care services may be provided to income eligible families who need child care to support their participation in education or work activities as defined in the TWC rules and Board approved Child Care Policies.

Training or Education-Related Expenses - Actual costs of the required items to participate in education and training are allowable and should be listed on the degree plan or syllabi. Such item(s) include uniforms/clothing, equipment/ supplies/tools, drug tests, exams, licenses, certifications, TASP/other exams for admission.

Transportation - Transportation services are provided via the most economical means available. Public transportation agencies or other providers who have contracts or agreements with the Board and/or Contracted Service Providers and are cooperating with efforts to create a regional transportation system should have first priority. In determining the proper use of transportation services, Contracted Service Providers must evaluate the individual's need for transportation services and act prudently in determining the best method or option in terms of availability and cost. Contracted Service Providers shall first look at public transportation as the primary means for transportation such as bus tokens or bus passes. However, if other options are considered such as taxi cabs, car pools, and van shuttles (if necessary for large groups), contractor must include supporting documentation justifying the non-use of public transportation. For example, cases may exist in an emergency or in special circumstances where public transportation cannot meet the individual's needs, such as working late nights or weekends when public transit is not available, or living in remote areas lacking public transportation. Essentially, proper screening of transportation needs must be performed and the latter options used as the last resort.

Car pooling of two or more participants as a means for transportation is encouraged. Each rider may receive a travel allowance and he/she would be responsible for paying the driver.

Other services that fall under the allowable transportation costs include: fees for obtaining a driver's license, state vehicle inspections, auto insurance and a State Issued Identification Card.

Individuals between 18 and 24 years of age are required to complete a driver education course and present the original certificate of completion at the driver license office when obtaining their driver license for the first time. Customers who can show an employment or training-related need, have access to a reliable vehicle upon obtaining their driver license, and include obtaining a driver license in their Individual Employment Plan can receive one-time assistance with the expense.

Housing Assistance- support of housing expenses shall include a plan that demonstrates the customer's ability to pay the remaining balance (if applicable) and the expense in the future without assistance.

Assistance for housing expenses may only be provided to individuals who are working full-time or attending full-time training.

Utilities- utilities necessary for daily living such as electricity, water, and gas may be paid together in a single month or for no more than two months and cannot exceed the established maximum amount in a 12 month period. For example, an electric bill and a water bill may both be paid if together they do not exceed the established maximum amount.

Work-Related Expenses – Work-related expenses may be paid in advance or as a reimbursement if necessary for a participant to accept or retain employment paying at least the federal minimum wage. Such expenses may include, but are not limited to tools, uniforms, work boots, equipment, housing expenses and the cost of vocationally required examinations or certificates. More expensive items such as tools and work boots will require verification from the employer that these items are required.

Support Services Not Allowed

No program funds will be authorized for reconnection fees, deposits for utilities or housing, long-distance telephone bills, utility bills more than two (2) months past due, traffic fines and/or penalties, damages, and other settlements resulting from violations (or alleged violations), personal vehicle payments, or vehicle title fees (registration).

Limits and Other Support Services

Exception requests for supportive services that exceed Board limits may be submitted to Board President/CEO, Deputy Director, or designee. These requests must be submitted **prior to payment request** with written justification on a case by case basis.

Board professionals also reserve the right to make final determinations regarding this policy based on changes to federal/state laws and regulations, program guidelines, or Board discretion.

Methods of Payment

No payment of support services, with the exception of reimbursements, will be made directly to the participant. Receipts are required and must be maintained for all reimbursements. All other payments are payable directly to the vendor after receipt of invoice.

Termination of Support Services

Support services are terminated based on the following reasons:

- Immediately upon determination of failure to meet program requirements;

- Support service system is being abused;
- Support service funding is not available;
- Individual is making unsatisfactory progress;
- Re-determination of financial need reveals individual has other resources to meet needs or no longer needs the service; or
- Individual exceeds income eligibility guidelines or other eligibility criteria.

Overpayment

If overpayment to an individual occurs, the Service Providers will include, at a minimum, the following action(s) as appropriate:

- Deductions of the overpayment from future payments; or
- Written notification(s), via certified mail, of the overpayment and reasonable repayment arrangements to collect;
- If overpayment is not recovered after sufficient notice via certified mail, the participant will be notified that legal action may be taken unless repayment is received within 30 calendar days; and
- If overpayment is not recovered, the participant will not be eligible for any support service until such funds are repaid.

Contracted Service Provider Action Required

Contracted Service Providers will establish support service procedures according to the policy stated above and consistent with the regulations of each specific funding source. Procedures will remain on file and be provided to all appropriate Career Center staff and any subcontractor or training provider who may be affected. The Contracted Service Provider will ensure that all Career Center staff and subcontractors are trained on the support service policy and procedures, as appropriate.

IV. PROCEDURES:

Determination of Need

Support services shall not be provided without an individual participant's determination of need. The net result of this determination must validate the need and amount of any services awarded. Procedures to determine an individual's need, at a minimum, should include:

- Determination of the individual's financial need for the service(s);
- Justification of service(s);
- Support of the final decision to provide or deny requested service(s);
- Assurance that the amounts paid for the various allowable support service items are reasonable and consistent with Board, Federal and State regulations;
- Provisions to ensure services being paid for are not otherwise reasonably available to the individual from other resources;
- Provisions to ensure the financial information provided by the individual is reasonably accurate;
- Requirements that a re-assessment and update of participants' financial data be complete prior to issuing a new voucher for support services; and
- Requirements for recurrent payments, such as transportation, child care, etc., to ensure continued receipt of support contingent on training attendance and/or performance.

Documentation

Documentation of resource exploration and rationale for approval, non-approval, and termination of support services provided to individuals will be entered in TWIST for tracking purposes. The participant's IEP will also support the services the participant needs to be successful. Referral to other community resources and results of those referrals are also to be apparent in the file.

Allowable support services that are limited to a one-time expense require documentation in TWIST and the support service voucher that states the date of the last time the individual received the one-time payment or states no payment received in the last 12 months. The date last received must be at least 12 months from the date the request is made.

V. RELATED POLICY INFORMATION:

Laws and regulations governing specific funding sources, as applicable, including the following:

- a. Texas Workforce Commission Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Rules: 40 TAC Chapter 841
- b. Texas Workforce Commission Choices Rules: 40 TAC Chapter 811
- c. Texas Workforce Commission Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training Rules: 40 TAC Chapter 813
- d. Texas Workforce Commission Child Care Services Rules: 40 TAC Chapter 809, and in accordance with the Board approved Child Care Policies
- e. NCP Choices: A Comprehensive Guide
- f. WD Letter 27-10, issued June 28, 2010, and entitled "Local Workforce Development Board Transportation Policies to Safeguard against the Misuse of Funds"
- g. WD Letter 06-10, issued February 2, 2010, and entitled "Trade Adjustment Assistance: Statewide Commuting Area and Reasonable Cost of Training Standard"

VI. RESPONSIBILITIES:

Board Staff shall ensure that Contracted Service Provider Staff are aware of and comply with this policy.

Contracted Service Providers shall ensure that appropriate procedures are implemented and that relevant Career Center staff receive training regarding the requirements of this policy. Contracted Service provider must ensure that support services provided to participants are allowable under each program's rules and regulations.

The Board Monitor shall provide oversight and evaluation of the Contracted Service Provider's disbursement of support services to eligible customers.

VII. FORMS AND INSTRUCTIONS: N/A

VIII. DISTRIBUTION:

Board of Directors

Board Staff

Contracted Service Provider

IX. SIGNATURES:

Reviewed by EO Officer

Date

President/CEO

Date

Support Services Limits
Attachment A

Allowable Support Services	Board Approved	Limits and Duration
Auto Insurance	YES	\$100; One-time expense
Bus Passes	YES	Current Rate
Car Repairs	YES	Maximum - up to \$500; Limited to minor repairs. One-Time Expense; Requires verification of need from vendor
Child Care	YES	Maximum - Established Reimbursement Rate; Paid while in program.
Clothing/Uniforms	YES	Maximum- up to \$200; One-Time Expense
Dental Exams	NO	
Dental Work	NO	
Driver Education Course	YES	Maximum- up to \$150; One-Time Expense
Eye Exams	YES	Maximum- up to \$150; One-Time Expense
Eye Glasses	YES	Maximum - up to \$200; One-Time Expense
Food Handler Health Card	YES	Current Rate; One-Time Expense
Hearing Exams	YES	Maximum - up to \$150; One-Time Expense
Hearing Aids	YES	Maximum- up to \$250; One-Time Expense
Incentives/Stipends for Job Retention	YES	See policy #4.0.100.04 Incentives/Stipends
Mileage	YES	Rate not to exceed \$15.00 per day for in or out of town travel.
Housing Assistance	YES	Maximum – up to \$600; One-Time Expense; full time work or training; plan for future payments
Test/Certification Fees/GED	YES	Maximum - Current Rate; One-Time Expense
Utilities	YES	Maximum - up to \$150; less than 2 months past due; may include a combination of 2 or more utilities
Tools, work boots, equipment	YES	Actual cost; full time work or training; tools and work boots for work requires verification from employer as required

Note: TAA has limitations as per WD Letter 27-10 and WD Letter 06-10.