

Northeastern Workforce Development Board (NWDB) General Policies and Procedures CUSTOMER SUPPORT SERVICES	
Policy 006	EFFECTIVE DATE: 8/15/2016 <i>Revised: 10/16/18 Revised: 5/11/20</i> <i>Revised: 12/9/21 Revised: 3/10/22</i> <i>Revised: 5/13/22 Revised: 09/14/2023</i> <i>Revised: 9/12/2024</i>
Approved by: Northeastern Workforce Development Board of Directors	Executive /Director: <i>Jalan Williamson</i>

PURPOSE: TEGL 09-22 requires local boards to issue policy guidance on technology purchases and establish written policy to purchase food for youth. The policy committee also reviewed and updated policy wording and grammar and created an appendix of allowable spending caps.

ATTACHMENT: NWDB Waiver Request form

BACKGROUND:

WIOA support services are available to those registrants who are eligible adults, dislocated workers and youth/young adults.

While support services are often important to the success of a customer in a training program, they are not an entitlement but rather are provided on a case-by-case basis as identified through the assessment process. Just as the training services relate to the customer’s employment and career goals, support services must relate to that individual’s training objectives and *not merely to his or her general needs*.

In practice, support service payments are meant to be limited both in duration and amount. For example, the duration of a service such as transportation assistance or childcare assistance is limited to the length or period of the enrollment or actual attendance in individual’s basic and/or training plan approved activities. These two types of support services may be renewed to coincide with a continuation of the customer’s enrollment in training or until training is completed.

General Support Services Policy Guidelines

Supportive services for youth, adults and dislocated workers are defined in **WIOA section 134(d)(2) and 20 CFR 680.900-680.930**. They include services such as transportation, child-care, health care and medical services, general clothing, relocation assistance, technology, and other support payments. This policy also addresses the provision of specific training and employment services purchased on behalf of customers necessary to enable an individual to participate in activities authorized under WIOA Title I. The following general policy guidelines apply to the provision of these services to customers enrolled in WIOA programs:

1. The support services described in this policy are designed to assist WIOA customers, who are receiving services to secure employment and/or ensure retention of employment; or to facilitate participation in employment and training activities funded under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 or other job training programs.
2. Supportive services may be in-kind, cash assistance, or services payable through arrangements with other agencies.

3. Supportive services may only be provided to adult, youth and dislocated workers who are unable to obtain supportive services through other programs providing such services.
4. Supportive services may only be provided when they are *necessary* to enable individuals to participate in Title I activities. WIOA section. (WIOA sec. 101(3) (d) (3) (F).
5. Supportive Services needed for youth to participate in work experiences can count toward the work experience expenditure requirement (TEGL 09-22).

Support Service Assessment and Planning Process

Assessment of a customer's need for support services begins with the Intake process where a customer's eligibility for WIOA services is determined. Following the Intake process an individual interview conducted with the customer will serve to further document the customer's need for WIOA services and assistance, including supportive services. The application interview includes a more in-depth exploration of the customer's education, work experience/history, vocational interests and preferences, hobbies, special talents, transportation availability, financial/subsistence concerns, employment goals, type of work, hours per week and wage requirements, medical concerns or issues, other training-military, family support system, relocation preferences and personal issues. Through an ongoing assessment process, the WIOA Staff works with each customer to find the most efficient mix of self-help, mutual aid and professional assistance both within the program and in the local community.

Based upon the results of the assessment process, the WIOA Staff will develop an estimate of costs of the customer's support service needs. The assessment must consider the duration and frequency of supports during the enrollment period and the customer's family and personal support system. Documentation of these resources as well as efforts to coordinate services with all other applicable resources and services within the local area must be documented in the WIOA program participant's basic and/or training plan. The participant's basic and/or training plan must be signed by the WIOA staff member and the individual to be considered a valid plan.

Support Services Cost Estimating

To estimate the costs of individual customer support service needs, WIOA Staff must first assess the duration and frequency of supports during the current individual's basic and/or training plan and secondly the customer family and personal support system. WIOA Staff must include the customer's internal and external support systems and resources before calculating the final cost covered using WIOA supportive service funds. The intent of relying in part on the customer to make ends meet without undue financial hardship is to foster and promote continued independence rather than a dependence on a system that may not exist once employed.

A financial plan is an integral part of the individual's basic and/or training plan and the subsequent success of the customer. The resources of the customer (specifically their financial subsistence capability) to participate in an individual's basic and/or training plan must also be integrated with actual costs or expenditures to provide services and purchase training over a known time frame. This allows the customer and WIOA Staff to manage the individual's basic and/or training plan funding as costs are dedicated and allocated to services. Planned amounts from the service needs analysis are automatically subtracted from the balance for each activity, giving the customer and WIOA Staff an accounting of available resources throughout the duration of the individual's basic and/or training plan.

Funding Limitations - Support Services

Because many customers' need for common support services like travel or childcare reimbursement could easily exceed the programs' financial ability this Policy limits the **total** financial value (**excluding emergency services**) of all support services including Transportation, Child Care, Health Care and Medical Services, General Clothing, and Relocation Assistance or

Other Support provided up to a **maximum of \$4,000 over the entire period** of a customer's enrollment. Funding availability and limitations will preclude providing every customer with maximum services. It is the role and responsibility of the NWDB's Service Provider(s) WIOA Staff to assist customers in identifying all other sources of support assistance, in addition to this limited funding, to meet basic support needs for the duration of their participation.

General Support Service Guidelines

The following general guidelines apply to all supportive service obligations:

1. **Assessment of Need:** All support service needs and anticipated expenses must be documented in the individual's basic and/or training plan. Need is defined as: "without assistance the customer would not be able to attend individual's basic and/or training plan activities or would create an undue financial hardship during the enrollment period". Unexpected support service expenses after the initial individual's basic and/or training plan has been signed must be included in a modification-revision to the WIOA program participant's basic and/or training plan, to be signed by the WIOA staff member and the participant. The additional expense must be approved and added to the original support service obligation. Unexpected support service costs must remain within the maximum allocation per participant. The support service plan, (start and end dates), must coincide with start and end activity dates.
2. **Authorization:** Completion of the AJLA Support Service Requisition Form, and where necessary, associated supporting documents by the WIOA Staff, constitutes the authorization process. All Support Service Requisitions must be forwarded to the Finance Department immediately in order to expedite reimbursement to the customer or to process authorizations for purchase on the customer's behalf. An authorization must be generated in advance of the expenditure of funds for the service. Costs incurred by a customer before the authorization of the service will not be reimbursed by Finance. It is the responsibility of the WIOA Staff to clearly communicate this restriction to customers.
3. **Requisition Process and Documentation:** All requisitions must include clear instructions regarding the time period of the service; the weekly rates, amounts, and total costs for the service; reimbursement procedures including name and address of vendors or providers of the service; and other required information that is needed to properly process the request. All requests must also include a brief explanation of the basis for the service as it relates to the customer's circumstances. These requisitions will be further reviewed by NWDB's Service Provider(s)'s Finance Department to ensure compliance with the Support Services Policy. Unclear or incomplete requisitions will be returned by the Finance Department to the WIOA Staff thus possibly delaying the customer's receipt of payments.
4. **Payments:** Payments to customers or vendors will be made by the Finance Department upon receiving a properly completed voucher from the customer and, if required, supporting receipts or invoices from the NWDB's Service Provider(s) or vendor. Vouchers received by the Finance Department that are missing required signatures will not be reimbursed and will be returned to the WIOA Staff. The WIOA Staff will be responsible for contacting the customer, correcting the voucher and re-submitting for payment.
5. **Waivers:** Limits specified in the policy with respect to dollar amounts or durations and the types of services allowable are to be used by WIOA Staff in determining a support service request. Waivers or exceptions to these may be requested to accommodate extraordinary circumstances. Requests for policy waivers must be in writing(Attachment A) and presented to the Service Provider's Management staff of Workforce Development for approval before final review and authorization can be determined by NWDB Director. The approved and signed waiver request will be uploaded along with service provider's internal authorization form.

Specific Support Service Guidelines

The following types of assistance may be provided to a customer attending approved or agreed upon activities listed in the individual's basic and/or training plan.

A. Transportation Assistance

1. Payment for transportation by private vehicle will be based on the current U.S. General Services Administration Privately Owned Vehicle rate, reimbursed up to a maximum of **\$200.00 per week**. The participant must travel a minimum of 10 miles one way. The number of miles per day authorized for reimbursement must be clearly specified in the Basic or training plan.
2. Whenever practical, car-pooling among customers is to be encouraged. A carpool driver who is a customer attending an activity in the same location will be reimbursed **\$6.00 (was \$3.00)** per day for each additional customer transported in addition to the per mile rate. Provisions for payment of car-pooling should be clearly stipulated on the Support Services Plan.
3. Alternate means of transportation will be covered for the actual costs of such transportation up to \$200.00 per week.
4. Payment of no more than \$400.00 for a bicycle is allowable with verification from mapquest confirming the actual distance required for travel and when the training or valid employment duration is seasonally appropriate. To purchase a bicycle the distance must be at least two miles and no more than 15 miles one way if physical health allows. The cost includes safety items including a reflective light or vest, a lock, and helmet. The individual service strategy (ISS) plan must include a goal to pay for transportation during the winter months. If the participant finds that this mode of transportation is not working for health or other reasons the participant must return the bicycle and all safety equipment to the service provider.
5. WIOA staff shall provide a web link or written copy of Maine's bicycle laws to each participant receiving a bicycle and ensure participants understand the provisions attached in the link provided: <https://www.maine.gov/mdot/bikeped/docs/MaineBicyclingLaws.pdf>

B. Child Care Assistance

Payments may be issued to appropriate vendor to help cover the expense of childcare as specified in the individual's basic and/or training plan.

It is the customer's responsibility to seek, choose and maintain adequate childcare services that will enable him or her to undertake training or employment activities. The responsibility of the NWDB's Service Provider(s) WIOA Staff includes providing referrals in regard to childcare; ensuring that the customer has an adequate childcare plan including back up arrangements.

Payments for childcare will be made on the following criteria:

1. Payments may be issued only for those hours a customer is in training, studying, or working (employment transition service) plus reasonable travel time to and from the childcare provider's location. In cases where childcare services are provided by a facility that requires payment even for days the children do not attend, the support service can be written to cover those hours. This may occur in instances of school vacations or holidays. The support service authorization should clearly state when this is the case.
2. Generally childcare payments will not be made where a member of the customer's household is available to provide the childcare during the hours the customer is engaged in training. Special circumstances need the approval of the Director/Manager of Workforce Development before payment to a family member residing in the customer's household will be made.

3. Childcare rates will be based on the current DHHS policy tables. Click on the following link to access the DHHS Childcare allowable rates:
https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/ocfs/ec/occhs/child_care/2018%20Market%20Rate.xls
4. Payment for childcare may be made through reimbursement to the customer or directly to the provider as specified in the Support Services Plan. In either case the payment will be made by the Finance Department upon receiving a properly completed Child Care Form including the signatures of the childcare provider and customer. The Service Provider is responsible for documenting participation in training (i.e.: grades or attendance logs).
5. Childcare costs that exceed the maximum participant allocation must be submitted through the waiver request process outlined above in this policy.

C. Health Related Services

1. Payments may be issued to cover the cost of supports and treatment services necessary for participant's emotional, mental, or physical wellbeing to enter or continue in subsidized/unsubsidized employment or training activities.
2. WIOA staff must first refer participants to low or no-cost supports or treatment services as well as collaborating with core partners and other community agencies.
3. Health-related services may include mental health/SUD evaluations, mental health/SUD counseling sessions, physical exams, dental work, glass, hearing aids and orthopedic shoes.
4. Where possible requisition for exams (for instance, eye exams) and follow-up services (for instance, glasses) should be submitted separately to make sure that the services are necessary.
5. The maximum allowable cost for supportive and treatment services with MaineCare providers must be at or below the set MaineCare rate for participants not eligible for MaineCare.
6. The maximum allowable cost for supportive and treatment services with non-MaineCare providers must be at or below the set MaineCare rate unless approved by a workforce manager. WIOA staff providers are responsible for verifying the MaineCare rates from the provider while negotiating and submitting quotes for services or can reference: <https://www.maine.gov/sos/cec/rules/10/144/ch101/c3s065.docx>.
7. In determining the estimated cost for services, workforce staff would calculate the estimated cost considering the duration, intensity, and cost per unit of service.
8. Maximum allowable spending cap is \$2000.00.

D. General Clothing

When a customer enrolled in training demonstrates a need for articles of clothing or other services that are necessary to meet a basic level of appearance or are necessary to ensure proper protection from the elements, such clothing may be purchased on behalf of the customer from support service funds. Clothing may be purchased as follows:

1. Payment for articles of general clothing is limited to **\$350** during the customer's enrollment period.
2. The customer must demonstrate a serious need for clothing based on requirements or general expectations of the training program or based on clearly observable appearance deficits related to clothing resources. Clothing purchases made for the purposes of appearance (as opposed to purchases of clothing to protect the customer from the elements) should be limited to those customers who are in an active job search.
3. The least expensive source of appropriate clothing must be used when authorizing a payment for general clothing needs.
4. The Plan must identify clothing to be purchased, what cost will be allowed and from what source. An itemized receipt from the vendor must be received for payment and for the participants file.

E. Relocation Assistance

Payments may be issued to cover the costs for relocation of a customer and dependents to a new residence when relocation is necessary to allow the customer to accept a job offer resulting from his or her participation in training. Payments for relocation may be made on the following basis:

1. Payments may be made only where a customer must move more than 50 miles from his or her place of residence and commuting is not feasible.
2. Payments for relocation are limited to a one-time payment of **\$800**.
3. *Actual costs of relocations must be documented with receipts for moving, i.e. ...* van rental, security deposits, initial rental, utilities, room and board. Payment will be made to the customer upon submission of documentation.

F. Technology

1. Computer/software: If a participant does not have reasonable access to a computer or software of sufficient capacity required for employment or training, then funds may be used to contribute up to \$600 for either the purchase of a new or refurbished computer, or to upgrade an old one, whichever is the least expensive method, or for required software to meet the employment or training need. The purchase, upgrade, or software must be a requirement for employment or training and documented in the participant's plan. A computer or software will not be purchased if the employer normally provides these items. Peripheral devices beyond an external keyboard or mouse will only be supported if they are required as an accessibility accommodation. A purchase, upgrade, or software will be provided one time only. Damaged, lost, or stolen computers or software will not be replaced. The cost for a computer/software or a combination of the two shall **not exceed \$600**.
2. Internet Access: Internet bills do qualify for a **maximum of \$50 per month**, only during the months the participant is enrolled in full-time (as consistent with the institution) learning experience, **for a maximum of \$1200**. Associated peripherals and software fall under section 1.
3. Cell Phones: If a participant does not have reasonable access to a phone of sufficient capacity for job search, employment, or training, then funds can be used to contribute up to **\$100 toward the purchase of a new phone**. The phone must be purchased outright and not on a plan. The purchase must enable the participant to communicate with their WIOA workforce specialist or a be requirement for employment or training and must be documented in the participant's plan. Other options, such as SafeLink Wireless, must be pursued. A phone will not be purchased if the employer normally provides one to employees. A purchase will be provided one-time only. If a computer and internet access has already been purchased for the participant, these can be used in lieu of a phone for job search or training. If a participant needs phone minutes and is unable to purchase them, then funds may be with an approved vendor **up to \$300** to buy such minutes. Minutes will be purchased in the most cost-effective increments during the time the participant is enrolled in the program and actively engaged in career/job search, training, or work-related activities.

G. Emergency or Other Support Services

Payments for service needs that arise out of an emergency situation or that otherwise represent a financial hardship for these costs is limited to \$1500 during the period of the customer's enrollment. These or Other (i.e., Follow up services) Support Services not referenced in this policy need prior approval by the Director/Manager of Workforce Development.

In cases of emergency situations, the WIOA Staff must document the nature of the emergency.

In the case of a statewide emergency declared by the Governor of Maine, the limited amount of emergency funding will be increased to \$2500.00 until the crisis ends.

H. Training and Employment Related Supplies

NWDB's Service Provider(s) may pay for supplies that are *required* by the training program or an employer. The following standards apply to the purchase of training supplies:

1. Training or employer specific supplies may include, but are not limited to, tools and equipment, books and supplies, training or occupational clothing and uniforms, safety materials and other related training supplies. The WIOA Staff are responsible for obtaining an exact itemized list of training supply needs *from* the training institution or employer (OJT).
2. Training supplies will not be purchased for a customer who already has the same or equivalent supplies or equipment.
3. Food for Youth
 - a) On a limited basis and in certain situations, food at a reasonable cost may be provided to youth-serving program participants as a supportive service.
 - b) Food may be provided to eligible youth when it will assist or enable the participant to participate in allowable youth program activities and to reach his/her employment and training goals.
 - c) WIOA staff are responsible for identifying how many meals will need to be purchased over the duration of a program activity and developing the meal plan for a participant or group of participants that will include cost per meal x total meals purchased, the food vendor, dates to be purchased, brief description of program activity, and explanation of how purchasing the food will best serve the participants and goals of the program activity.
 - d) A record of food purchased during group activities shall be documented in each participant's ISP.
 - e) A record of food purchased during individualized activities shall be documented in the participant's ISP.
 - f) Participants with emergency food needs or known to WIOA staff as having regular or chronic food insecurity are to be directed to local food banks and other resources available through other local, state, or federal programs.

J. Bonding Assistance

Bonding assistance is provided through the Federal Government and the Maine Employment Security Commission.

Appendix I. Supportive Services - maximum allowable amount is \$4,000 total over duration of enrollment. When an item has no limitations on the cap amount, the cap will **default** to the remaining supportive service funds available in the \$4,000 maximum allowable amount (see Items marked with asterisk).

Itemized Caps

- *Transportation cost \$200 weekly
- *Carpool cost \$6 per day

- *Alternate means of transportation- \$200 weekly
- Bicycle - \$400
- *Childcare - N/A
- Healthcare - N/A
- General Clothing - \$350
- Relocation cost - \$800
- Computer/software - \$600
- Internet Access - \$60 per month (not to exceed \$1500)
- Cell Phone Purchase - \$100
- Cell Phone Minutes - \$300
- Emergency Funds - \$1500
- Food for Youth - N/A

Questions may be directed to:

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NWDB Waiver request form

<https://acrobat.adobe.com/id/urn:aaid:sc:us:6184ce49-e31c-4023-b712-731eb6b4783e>