

<b>Northeastern Workforce Development Board (NWDB)</b> <b>General Policies and Procedures</b> <b>CUSTOMER SUPPORT SERVICES</b>	
<b>Policy 006</b>	<b>EFFECTIVE DATE: 3/19/2026</b>
<b>Approved by: Northeastern Workforce Development Board of Directors</b>	<b>Executive /Director:</b> <i>Galan &amp; Willinger</i>

**PURPOSE:** To provide policy and procedures for use of supportive services with participants in order for them to achieve their identified training/employment goals.

**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 their 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**

NWDB has determined that the total of any/all supportive services received by an individual participant may not exceed \$5500 over a participant's enrollment period.

### **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. **Registration / Liability Insurance:** Reimbursement is allowed for registration/liability insurance only if the participant provides proof of payment to WDS staff. Documentation

of proof of payment must be uploaded to the participant file for reimbursement to take place. Registration/liability insurance reimbursement can be provided one time per participant for up to \$300.

2. 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. Payments made for transportation cover routine costs like gas, oil changes, tire alignments and balancing.
3. 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.
4. Alternate means of transportation will be covered for the actual costs of such transportation up to \$200.00 per week.
5. Driver's License/Driver's Education (Class C): including driving time must not exceed \$750.
6. Total expenses for vehicle repair may not exceed \$1500. Repairs are only allowed for required correction/repair of vehicle deficiencies necessary to pass State Inspection (i.e.: failure of State Inspection) and/or ability to operate the vehicle. Towing may be considered as part of the vehicle repair not to exceed \$200.00. Only for the primary mode of transportation during the training period will be eligible for repairs. This policy may cover costs even if the primary customer is unable to drive but has retained a "driver" for the vehicle to be used for the purposes enumerated in 1.) above. a. If tires are needed to pass inspection, only all-season tires will be allowed. b. A minimum of one written itemized estimate/quote authorized with a mechanic's sign-off must be on file. The service provider may request a second quote if the costs are questionable.
7. Payment of no more than \$600.00 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, at least one mile and no more than 10 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.
8. Payment of no more than \$1400 for an e-bike and safety items such as reflective lights or vest, helmet, lock, snow tires, side mirrors. is allowable with verification from MapQuest or google maps confirming the actual distance required for travel and when the training or employment is between one and 10 miles from place of residence or co-occurring training or employment activities require expedited travel for participant to be on time to multiple scheduled activities.
9. Participants must have access to inside storage to store and charge the bike, be physically able to drive the bike, understand that riding a bicycle can be hazardous and waive any claim of liability against Maine Department of Labor, Northeastern Workforce Development Board, or WIOA Service Provider in connection with use and operation of purchased e-bike, agree to maintain bike according to operator manual, operate e-bike legally and safely, and to wear a helmet. If at any time in the 1<sup>st</sup> year, decide that the e-bike is no longer useful to return e-bike to WIOA Service Provider.

10. WIOA staff shall provide a web link or written copy of Maine’s bicycle laws to each participant receiving a bicycle or e-bike and ensure participants understand the general provisions provided:

<https://www.maine.gov/dot/sites/maine.gov.dot/files/docs/bikeped/docs/MaineBicyclingLaws.pdf>

Of operation and laws specific to e-bikes:

[https://legislature.maine.gov/legis/bills/bills\\_129th/billtexts/HP088201.asp](https://legislature.maine.gov/legis/bills/bills_129th/billtexts/HP088201.asp)

## **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/sites/maine.gov.dhhs/files/inline-files/2024%20Maine%20OCFS%20Child%20Care%20Market%20Rate%20Survey%20Final%20Report.pdf>.
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/substance use disorder (SUD) evaluations, mental health/SUD counseling sessions, physical exams, dental work, glasses, 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 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/dhhs/oms/providers/provider-bulletins/mainecare-rate-setting-and-reform-did-you-know-2024-06-10>.
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. Software, peripheral devices, and language software devices beyond an external keyboard or mouse will only be supported if they are required as an accessibility accommodation and meet the employment or training need. 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 Housing Assistance**

Emergency needs are items not previously covered under this policy. Documentation supporting the need and establishing that the items or services are required to enable the participant to continue her/his activity in the program and/or to obtain or retain employment must be clear. Support items in this category shall not exceed \$1,500, which may include emergency assistance with rent, security deposit, heat, electrical, Supportive Services under this category are based upon necessity for completion of employment, education, and training activities established in the participant's Employment/Training Plan, availability of funds, and are only for expenses not available from other sources such as General Assistance (GA), Refugee Assistance (RA), the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), food pantries, etc. Insurance coverage costs are not allowed and may not be covered as an emergency cost.

### **H. Emergency or Other Support Services**

Payments for service needs that arise out of an emergency situation or that otherwise represent financial hardship because these costs are limited to \$500 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.

### **I. 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.

## **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 \$5,500 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 \$5.500 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 - \$600
- E-Bike - \$1400
- Registration/Liability Insurance - \$300
- Driver's Ed/Driver's License - \$750
- Vehicle Repair - \$1500 (includes \$200 for towing)
- \*Childcare - N/A
- Healthcare - \$2000
- General Clothing - \$350
- Relocation cost - \$800
- Computer/software - \$600
- Internet Access - \$50 per month (not to exceed \$1200)
- Cell Phone Purchase - \$100
- Cell Phone Minutes - \$300
- Emergency Housing Assistance - \$1500
- Emergency or Other Support Services - \$500

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>