

HEART OF TEXAS WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD POLICY

ID NO.:	HWD 008-04 HWD 008-04-01 HWD 008-04-02 HWD 008-04-03 HWD 008-04-04 HWD 008-04-05 HWD 008-04-06 HWD 008-04-07	DATE ISSUED:	January 31, 2004 Change 1, date 09-01-06 Change 2, date 09-01-08 Change 3, date 07-17-10 Change 4, date 05-15-14 Change 5, date 02-16-17 Change 6, date 05-18-17 Change 7, date 05-21-18
PROGRAM:	WIOA, TANF Choices, SNAP E&T	KEYWORD:	Supportive Services

Subject: **Revision of the Comprehensive Supportive Services Policy for Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families - Choices, and SNAP Employment and Training Programs**

References: Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA)
 WIOA Final Regulations (Title 20 CFR 663.800 – 663.810 and Title 20 CFR 664.440)
 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996
 Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Final Regulations (45 CFR, Part 265)
 Texas Workforce Commission Choices Rules: 40 TAC Chapter 811
 Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002
 United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Rules and Regulations, as amended June 19, 2002

Discussion: Due to changes in performance measures and the resulting need to assist youth in maintaining their enrollment in educational activities post exit the policy needed updating.

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Section I. Supportive Services Policy Overview

- A. Supportive Services are those financial or physical accommodations that are reasonable and necessary for an individual to successfully participate in workforce activities and employment authorized under Title I of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) Choices, or SNAP Employment and Training.
- B. WIOA Dislocated Workers, Adults, and Youth receiving and/or enrolled in Career Services, Training or Post-Program Services may be eligible for Supportive Services if they are unable to obtain assistance from other programs providing such services.
- C. *1.* Individual Supportive Services needs are initially assessed at program enrollment. All efforts to meet identified Supportive Services needs begin with referral to other appropriate community sources. Such sources must first be exhausted by the participant and documented in the case file and TWIST before workforce funds may be authorized. Therefore, a case management staff with thorough understanding of the resources and services available from other agencies is imperative.
2. In addition, individuals in WIOA funded Training Services must apply for student financial aid to be considered for Supportive Services unless the training institution or program does not have aid available. All financial aid awarded must be considered when calculating Supportive Service needs.
- D. *1.* Support may be provided for goods and/or services that promote job retention, effective job searching, or to assist a customer meet participation or attendance in an activity that leads to employment. Payments must be defined as work related and are allowed as long as the customer remains in one of the aforementioned customer groups. Documentation must be in TWIST for authorization of payments.
2. Individual participant’s extent of need for Supportive Services must be identified during the development of the appropriate service plan. To the extent possible, similarly situated participants will receive similar Supportive Services. A participant’s Supportive Services needs must be reviewed for changes in status when transferring from one allowable activity of the enrolled program to another activity, and at least every ninety days or as required by the specific program.
- E. Generally, Supportive Services may include transportation, child care, dependent care, housing and utility assistance, job search expenses, training or work-related expenses, and one-time emergency assistance with documented need. Supportive Services are limited:
1. to expenses incurred by the participant and directly related to sustaining participation in WIOA, TANF-Choices, and/or SNAP E&T activity/ies, and/or

2. to expenses incurred and necessary to retain employment during post-program period.
- F.** Supportive Services may be provided to WIOA In-school youth to retain part-time employment during active participation, and/or to stay in school during the 12-month post-program follow-up period.
- G.** Supportive Services are not to be a regular part of a participant's financial plan, except in the instance of child care and/or transportation. Child care and transportation assistance notwithstanding, Supportive Services are one-time, short term or emergency assistance. For emergency assistance, the participant must provide the case manager with their plan to prevent recurrence of an emergency condition and this must be documented in TWIST.
- H.** Supportive Services are available to:
- unemployed participants,
 - any participant whose family income is documented as below the established Lower Living Standard,
 - employed participants needing assistance to retain their job,
 - former TANF recipients and post-program WIOA participants for up to 12 months,
 - unemployed TANF applicants and former recipients may receive short-term, nonrecurring" assistance for up to four months.
- I.** All payments must be documented in TWIST including justification and documentation.
- J.** Receipts are required for all reimbursements.
- K.** Allocations for services in the Heart of Texas Workforce Development Area are inadequate to equitably provide Needs Based Payments as allowed under WIOA, and, therefore, such payments are not available through any Heart of Texas Workforce Center to any participant.
- L.** *1.* The Heart of Texas Workforce Development Board expects specific Supportive Services standard operating procedures and systems to be developed and implemented by Heart of Texas Workforce contractors. These must include but not be limited to:
- Financial need evaluation;
 - TWIST data collection and data entry requirements;
 - Documentation requirements;
 - Timelines/signatures for approval, authorization, payment;
 - Reimbursement to customers v. advance payment;
 - Case review;

- Termination of Supportive Services;
 - Extenuating circumstance case consideration.
2. Workforce contractors must submit procedures and forms to Board staff for review prior to the beginning of the Program Year, when revisions are made, or within 30 days of the effective date of this policy.

Section II. Policy Governing Allowable Supportive Services While Participating in Workforce Services Other than Training

- A.** The following provides descriptions of allowable Supportive Services for which assistance to individuals may be provided. However, allowability does not imply entitlement. Need and availability of funds must be the basis for contractor procedures to authorize Supportive Services.
- B. 1.** To establish and maintain eligibility for Supportive Services while participating in career services, the participant must be actively seeking employment, maintain service activity, and maintain reasonable and frequent contact with assigned case manager, weekly or monthly in accordance with program requirements.
2. Alternate sources of assistance must first be exhausted, and, based on assessment of the customer's present circumstances; contractors maintain the authority to provide a partial amount requested for a Supportive Service or to refuse payment. All decisions for partial or no payment must be documented in TWIST.
3. Unemployed sanctioned families and conditional applicants must show one month of demonstrated cooperation before Supportive Services (other than Child Care) can continue. After successfully demonstrating cooperation, Supportive Services can continue for conditional applicants and sanctioned families as long as their TANF case has not been denied.
- C.** Supportive Services allowable for customers of TANF Choices, SNAP E&T, WIOA Adult, Dislocated Workers and Youth in Workforce Services include:
- 1. Transportation**
- a.** A customer may be provided assistance with transportation to activities in the Individual Employment Plan (IEP) or the Family Employment Plan (FEP). In determining transportation allowances, case managers must evaluate individual customer situations, availability of transportation resources, and the most appropriate and economical method of meeting transportation needs.
 - b.** Public transportation is considered most appropriate when available, and when it meets the requirements of a customer schedule and activity location. Case managers may provide customers bus tokens or passes, or may pay for other forms of public transportation at rates published by the transportation provider.

- d. For customers using personal automobiles who need assistance with gasoline expense, transportation allowances shall not exceed \$20 per day. Actual assistance must be based on the mileage from participant's residence to the location of the activity.
- e. Payments must be documented in TWIST, and may continue as long as the customer maintains satisfactory participation and/or progress in the assigned activity. The customer will not be paid for days of non-participation or when the required customer activities are not attended. In the case of youth, mileage expense can be paid to a parent or other adult responsible for transporting the youth to activity/ies.
- f. **Transportation allowances are to be paid in advance to remove the immediate barrier to participation.** Case managers must determine any necessary adjustments for absences or non-participation and may deduct the amount from the immediate subsequent payment or delay issuance of the next bus pass or gas card or other reasonable means to ensure that the transportation assistance is justified by participation in activities.
- g. Costs associated with unforeseen repair of a personal vehicle may be considered for reimbursement not to exceed a cumulative total of **\$1,200 per 12-month period** of active participation, if the vehicle is the only transportation available to the participant and disrepair will result in the customer no longer attending activity/ies with the following caveats:
 - i. Authorization for the repairs must be signed by the case manager, the case manager's supervisor and the financial officer at the workforce center.
 - ii. Participant must provide proof of ownership of the vehicle prior to approval of the repair.
 - iii. A legitimate estimate must be submitted at the time of the request for repair, with reimbursement made on the final invoice or receipt, which must be provided to the case manager within 10 working days of the completion of repair work. Prepayment for the repairs is not allowed. These documents must be maintained in the customer file and a proper notation made in TWIST.
 - iv. A waiver of the cumulative total cap (\$1,200) may be approved **ONLY** by the Financial Manager or Project Manager for accountability. This individual must sign an approval form or memo designed by the one stop operator and when signed, must be maintained in the customer's file and notated in TWIST.
- h. Assistance with the payment of automobile liability insurance for a personal vehicle may be considered for reimbursement not to exceed a cumulative total of \$1,000, if the vehicle is the only transportation available to the participant and will result in the customer no longer attending activity/ies with the following caveats:
 - Authorization for liability insurance payments must be signed by the case manager, the case manager's supervisor and the financial officer at the workforce center. Monthly liability insurance payments can be made for up to six months or until the \$1,000 maximum is met.

- i. Participant must provide proof of ownership of the vehicle prior to any payment for insurance. Reimbursement shall be made upon receipt of proof of payment which must be provided to the case manager within 10 working days.
 - ii. Payment of liability insurance is not allowed for SNAP E&T customers as per WD Letter 06-17.
- i. Costs for vehicle Registration or State Inspection are NOT allowed.
- j. Car payments are NOT allowed.
- k. School district bus transportation should be used whenever possible for transporting in-school youth to WIOA activities off-campus.
- l. Receipts must be obtained for all reimbursements. Receipts will be maintained in the case file. Contractors must include the review of receipts as part of their usual monitoring reviews.
- m. Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) participants who are co-enrolled in WIOA are eligible for dislocated worker-funded support services. However, if a Trade-certified worker lacks the job skills required to secure suitable employment and is required to commute more than 50 miles for occupational training, federal regulations dictate that TAA-funded transportation and subsistence payments:
 - are not subject to any caps; and
 - must not be used for expenses such as vehicle repairs, car insurance, registration, or consumables.
 - As described in the TAA Guide

2. *Housing and Utilities*

- a. Assistance with the payment of housing/rental or utility expenses may be provided to a participant who is active in a workforce program activity. Only one payment of a type, i.e. water, gas, electricity, will be provided in a six-month period; that payment can be for up to three months of expenses which are in arrears. To receive this assistance, a letter stating that eviction or shut off is eminent, a shut off or eviction policy substantiating that shutoff or eviction is imminent, or a notice of eviction or utility shut-off must be submitted to the case manager and documented in TWIST. Payment of late and/or cutoff fees is allowable if the payment is a requirement to prevent shutoff or eviction or to reestablish services. Allowable assistance includes full or partial payment of monthly rent on leased housing, electric bill, gas bill, water bill, or local land line service phone bill, charged to the residence of record of the participant. Case managers must scan a copy of the documentation into the customer's file and make appropriate notes in TWIST.
- b. Temporary shelter may be secured and paid for to assist homeless individuals participate in workforce services. Such assistance may continue for up to three months and requires Board staff approval.
- c. On-campus or training-related housing is allowed for WIOA customers who live more than 50 miles from the campus where enrolled in full-time training or short-term training (short term training is of a duration no more than six weeks of full-time training – at least four hours per day, five days per week) that requires daily attendance. It is also allowable for persons who are

homeless or living in a shelter and who cannot attend school without living arrangements. Other situations may be considered on a case-by-case basis.

3. Health and Medical Services

- a. The purchase of eyeglasses, hearing aids or other medical items necessary to succeed in training and employment is allowable.
- b. WIOA may pay for immunizations and tests required for admission to a training institution that cannot be obtained through the customer's personal medical insurance or a public health organization. While no dollar limit is placed, payments must be reasonable and customary for the particular service. Supportive Services will not pay for health or accident insurance.
- c. Approval for these services may be granted **ONLY** by Financial Manager or Project Manager for accountability_. This individual must sign an approval form or memo designed by the Center System Contractor that must be scanned into the customer's file and notated in TWIST.

4. Relocation Assistance

Relocation assistance is provided to TANF Choices or WIOA customers who obtain employment in another area, and who are financially unable to move and begin work. The amount of assistance may not exceed **\$500**. Relocation assistance is limited to truck rental or automobile mileage, bus tickets, and hotel/motel costs for up to three nights. Employment and relocation expenses shall be reimbursed upon submission of verifiable receipts. Such documents shall be scanned into the participant's file and documented in TWIST.

5. Child Care

All Child Care Program Rules and Policies apply to participants in need of Child Care Services. During assessment, customers in need of child care are to be evaluated for eligibility under the specific and appropriate Program Rules and Policies, and if found eligible, referred to the Child Care Services contractor to arrange care. Care should be arranged to commence by the first scheduled activity of the participant. Contractors must notify Child Care Services on the same day that services, eligibility, or participation ends as per childcare requirements.

6. Dependent Care

WIOA Supportive Services can be used to pay for dependent care for an individual (other than a child) for whom the customer has custodial care and requires supervised care during the time the customer attends workforce activities. (Sufficient documentation must be provided.)

6. GED Exam Fees

GED Exam fees may be paid for customers in CHOICES, SNAP E&T and/or WIOA. The customer must demonstrate readiness to take the GED exam by attaining sufficient scores on the official GED practice test, or by notice from the instructor of record that monitored progress indicates readiness. Customers can have four tests paid for with the option for a fifth with written Board staff

approval. Payments up to the amount charged to other customers of the GED test centers may be paid. These charges should cover the actual cost of testing, any national or state processing fees, and the cost of the certificate. Exams required for admittance to a post-secondary training institution may be paid for with WIOA funds for one administration of the examination.

7. *Job Search Related Expenses*

Customers hygienic or presentation needs may be provided for upon start of the job search process. These may include, but are not limited to a haircut, interviewing outfit, tattoo removal, or other items identified and justified by the case manager and documented in TWIST, not to exceed \$100. Out-of-area Job Search expenses may be provided to include transportation to job interviews and overnight accommodations and meals not to exceed approved State of Texas travel guidelines with a maximum cumulative total of \$250. All expenses must be verified and documented in TWIST, and in accordance with contractor procedures.

8. *Work Related Expenses*

When a customer secures employment, and is in need of assistance the following may be provided in advance or as a reimbursement, based on the individual's needs for the job. Work-related expenses are also allowable when an individual participates in community service and/or work experience activities. SNAP E&T customers may receive work related expenses to accept a verified job paying no less than the federal minimum wage. Covered expenses may include but are not limited to transportation related items, uniforms, boots, shoes, tools, etc., and the cost of required examinations or certificates necessary for employment. TANF Choices customers may receive a work-related expenses to accept (or retain) a specific and verified job paying no less than the federal minimum wage. Work related expenses include, but are not limited to, tools, uniforms, equipment, transportation, car repairs, housing, moving expenses, and the cost of required examinations or certificates necessary for employment. WIOA adults, dislocated workers and youth may receive work related expenses to accept (or retain) a specific and verified job paying no less than the federal minimum wage. Work related expenses include, but are not limited to, tools, uniforms or other clothing, equipment, transportation, car repairs, housing, moving expenses, and the cost of required examinations or certificates necessary for employment.

- Choices work-related expenses may cover other costs associated with ownership of a vehicle. These associated costs may include repairs, fees and inspections.

9. *Relocation Assistance*

Relocation Assistance is provided to TANF Choices or WIOA customers who obtain employment in another area, and who are financially unable to move and begin work. The amount of assistance may not exceed **\$500**. Relocation assistance is limited to truck rental or automobile mileage, bus tickets, and

hotel/motel costs for up to three nights. Employment and relocation expenses shall be reimbursed upon submission of verifiable receipts. Such documents shall be scanned into the participant's file and documented in TWIST.

Section III. Policy Governing Allowable Supportive Services While Participating In Workforce Training Services

- A. To establish and maintain eligibility for Supportive Services while participating in WIOA training services, participants must be enrolled with a certified training provider. Supportive Services allowable for customers of WIOA Adult, Dislocated Workers and Youth in Training Services include:
- 1. Any Supportive Services for which there is demonstrated need under Section II of this policy.**
 - 2. Health and Medical Services**
 - a. The purchase of eyeglasses, hearing aids or other medical items necessary to secure and maintain employment is allowable.
 - b. WIOA may pay for immunizations and tests required for admission to a training institution that cannot be obtained through the customer's personal medical insurance or a public health organization. While no dollar limit is placed, payments must be reasonable and customary for the particular service. Supportive Services will not pay for health or accident insurance. The purchase of eye glasses, hearing aids or other medical items necessary to succeed in training and employment is allowable.
 - c. Approval for Health and Medical Services financial support may be granted ONLY by the manager with the highest authority of the. This individual must sign an approval form or memo designed by the Center System Contractor that must be scanned into the customer's file and notated in TWIST.
 - 3. *On-campus or training-related housing***

On-campus or training-related housing is allowed for customers who live more than 50 miles from the campus where enrolled in full-time training that requires daily attendance. It is also allowable for persons who are homeless or living in a shelter and who cannot attend school without living arrangements. Other situations may be considered on a case-by-case basis in accordance with contractor procedures.
 - 4. *Per-diem for meals***

Per-diem for meals may be provided based on individual situations such as living on-campus, attending schools requiring special living arrangements outside their regular place of residence, or commuting to a training location requiring eight hours or more of time in that location on any single day. Such participants may receive meal assistance at a rate of \$10 per training day. The daily rate of assistance may also be paid for weekends and holidays when training is not conducted, when the customer remains at the campus location. If the attendance

record indicates the trainee has missed days of training for any reason other than illness or jury duty, Workforce staff must reduce the participant's next payment at the daily rate for each day missed.

- B. Priority for Supportive Services for customers participating in WIOA approved training is for those enrolled in training with a Certified Training Provider within the six county Heart of Texas Workforce Development Area. Customers enrolled with a Certified Training Provider located outside the Heart of Texas Workforce Area are eligible for Supportive Services on a case-by-case basis in accordance with contractor's procedures and to the extent that funds are available.

Section IV. Policy Governing Allowable Supportive Services During the Post-Program Period Following Successful Completion of Program Services

- A. WIOA customers may continue to qualify for needed Supportive Services during the 12-month post-program period.
 - 1. To qualify for continuing assistance, employment and/or enrolled in education or training and reasonable **monthly** contact with assigned post-program case manager must be maintained. Financial need for continuation of WIOA Supportive Services must be evaluated every 60 days, and individuals who neglect to schedule such a review shall cease receiving Supportive Services assistance. In any case, contractors may provide a reduced level of assistance or refuse payment requests made by the individual based on evaluation of the customer's current financial circumstances.
 - 2. TANF applicants and former TANF recipients are eligible to receive job retention Supportive Services for up to 12 months. Unemployed TANF recipients may continue to receive short-term, nonrecurring support services for up to four months. Services that are provided longer than four months are defined as assistance, trigger time limits, and are not allowable expenditures.
- B. All decisions to maintain, reduce or terminate Supportive Services must be entered in TWIST and documented in case notes.

EFFECTIVE DATE for Change 7: 5/21/18