

# OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FOR ADMINISTRATION

## Fiscal Services Division

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### Policy

The Fiscal Services Division of the Department of Children and Families (DCF) shall be responsible for the overall financial administration of DCF including oversight of the agency budget and the child welfare accounting system.

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### Oversight

External monitoring and evaluation activities shall be conducted by:

- the State Auditors of Public Accounts
- the Office of the State Comptroller
- the State Department of Education
- the federal Department of Health and Human Services

The Fiscal Services Division shall operate under the requirements of:

- state statutes and regulations
- state Department of Administrative Services' General Letters
- DCF policy
- the Office of the State Comptroller
- the state Office of Policy and Management
- the State Treasurer
- the federal Department of Health and Human Services
- the federal Office of Management and Budget

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### Payments on Behalf of Children and Families

Payments shall be made on behalf of children and families receiving DCF services when it has been determined that the services being purchased are in accord with the case plan goals, objectives and stated activities.

DCF shall assume responsibility for managing the financial resources of children committed to its care through the establishment of an estate, when applicable.

As long as a child's care is eligible for federal Title IV-E funding, payments for his or her covered expenses shall be made under that program whenever possible. Payments for items not covered by Title IV-E shall be made from DCF funds with the approval of Regional Office management.

**Cross-reference:** DCF Policy 2-2-1, "Revenue Enhancement."

All other children are eligible for payment for DCF-funded services that are consistent with the child's case plan.

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### Parents' Financial Responsibility

If the parents are able to pay for or provide part or all of the expenses for a child in placement, they shall be expected and encouraged to do so. Such payments may include monetary contributions to the cost of board and care, and payments in-kind, such as supplying clothing.

A determination of the ability of parents as legally liable relatives shall be conducted by the Department of Administrative Services' Bureau of Collection Services in accordance with the procedures in the following section.

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### Legally Liable Relatives

The Department of Administrative Services' Bureau of Collection Services shall be notified of all placements of children into DCF care. DAS-BCS will determine if a legally liable relative has the ability to contribute toward the cost of care.

A legally liable relative is defined in Conn. Gen. Stat. §4a-12(g) as "the husband or wife of any person receiving or who has received State care or assistance, and the father and mother of any such person receiving or who has received State care or assistance while under the age of eighteen years, but shall not include the parent or parents who's financial liability for a child is determined by the Office of Child Support Services."

To determine the capacity of the legally liable relative(s) to contribute toward the cost of care, these procedures shall be followed:

- prior to placement (if an emergency placement, as soon after as possible), the child's Social Worker shall obtain a copy of the legally liable relative's latest federal income tax return
- if the Social Worker is unable to obtain a copy of the tax return, he or she shall request copies of W-2 forms and the parents' most recent pay stubs
- if no information can be obtained, the Social Worker shall notify DCF Child Welfare Accounting (CWA)
- the Social Worker shall fax a copy of the tax return or other income information to CWA at (860) 723-7250
- the original copy of the tax return shall be given back to the legally liable relative

Within 24 hours, the Bureau of Collection Services DAS-BCS shall compute the billing rate and fax a copy of the "Notice of Billing" to the Social Worker at the Area Office indicating the monthly assessment. DAS-BCS shall bill and collect from the legally liable relative.

The Social Worker shall notify DAS-BCS when the child is placed by returning the "Notice of Billing" signed by the legally liable relative(s) to DAS-BCS. A copy of the agreement shall be given to the legally liable relative(s).

The Social Worker shall record all information in the Case Activity Notes in the electronic database and file copies of correspondence in the appropriate section of the Uniform Case Record.

Two types of waivers from billing may be granted to a legally liable relative by DAS-BCS. A waiver may be granted if it is determined by DAS-BCS that the imposition of a bill would cause a financial hardship for the legally liable relative.

- A finding of "financial hardship" may be based upon:
  - loss of gainful employment;
  - an increase in the number of family dependents from the last federal tax reporting year; or
  - expenses resulting from a catastrophic event or other items of a similar nature.

OR

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### Legally Liable Relatives (Continued)

- A waiver may be granted if it is determined that the benefit of assistance or service provided would be significantly impaired if billing were instituted. This type of waiver shall be requested by a Deputy Commissioner of DCF.

Approved waivers shall be reviewed annually by DAS-BCS for continuing appropriateness.

A legally liable relative who has requested a waiver who is aggrieved by the decision of the Commissioner of DAS Administrative Services may request a hearing from DAS, in writing, within 30 days of the mailing of the notice of the decision.

A diversion of a child's income to a parent to help maintain a residence that the child may eventually return to may be requested by the DCF Deputy Commissioner for Administration. The Assistant Bureau Chief of Child Welfare shall send the Deputy Commissioner a memo documenting the basis for requesting the diversion of income.

The child's own income [such as but not limited to Social Security, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Veteran's Administration benefits, earnings and support payments designated by a court for the child's care] shall be considered to be separate and distinct from the expected legally liable relative's contribution and shall be applied toward the cost of care.

If, due to a financial hardship of the family, the diversion of the child's income is considered essential to the eventual return of the child home, the Deputy Commissioner for Administration shall request approval of the diversion of income from DAS-BCS.

### Grants and Contract Unit

The Grants and Contracts Unit shall be responsible for overseeing the development and procurement of performance-based contractual services and administering and reviewing a utilization system to track the number of out-of-home placements in programs operated by private providers.

Performance-based contractual services consist of the following activities:

- reviewing and processing Regional Office and DCF facility contracts for fiscal and technical conformance
- writing and processing Central Office and statewide contracts
- developing annual state and federal spending plans
- implementing the policies and procedures of the unit
- standardizing all contracting policies and procedures

DCF shall comply with all state statutes and regulations regarding procurement standards for Personal Service Agreements and Purchase of Service Contracts.

All DCF staff shall comply with state and federal law regarding fraud, waste or abuse of state or federal resources, including the submission of false claims for payment.

**See** Attachment A, "Grants and Contracts: Combatting Fraud, Waste and Abuse/False Claims."

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**Grants and Contract Unit**  
(Continued)

Requests for proposals (RFP) issued by DCF shall include:

- a brief program category of the initiative
- the source of funding (federal or state)
- a statement of purpose
- the period of award
- the amount of the award
- the number of applications DCF plans to fund

To achieve service goals, DCF may include in requests for proposals:

- priority consideration
- special requirements

**Cross-reference:** Attachment B, "Grants and Contracts: Procurement of Services by RFP."

The Grants and Contracts Unit shall also be responsible for assisting DCF staff with the development of Memoranda of Agreement and Memoranda of Understanding with State of Connecticut agencies. An MOA or MOU shall be initiated by submitting the "Memorandum of Agreement/Understanding Request."

**Credentialed Services**

DCF shall credential all service providers receiving payment from DCF. **Credentialing** means a formal system whereby individuals and organizations apply to provide specific DCF-funded services to children and their families and, upon approval of their applications, enter into Provider Agreements with DCF. The services are purchased through applicable wraparound services funding. Details of the credentialing process can be found in the "Credentialed Services Practice Guide."

**Estates and Benefits**

Benefits received for behalf of a child in the care or custody of DCF shall first be used to reimburse DCF for expenditures made on behalf of the child.

**Legal reference:** Conn. Gen. Stat. §17b-223.

An estate shall be established for those benefits that exceed the cost of care. The estate shall be billed in accordance with DCF's expenditures, on behalf of the child, but not more than the actual cost of care.

In the best interests of the child, there shall be exceptions to the billing of the estate by DCF as determined by the Office of the Attorney General and Conn. Gen. Stat §46b-129(I).

When monthly Social Security benefits are greater than the monthly expenditures for the child, the additional benefit shall be returned to the Social Security Administration. For other monthly benefits, any unexpended balance may be held in reserve for the child's future.

Unexpended Social Security funds shall be returned to the Social Security Administration when DCF's role as representative payee is terminated.

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### **Estates and Benefits** (Continued)

**Cross reference:** DCF Policy 2-2-1, "Revenue Enhancement," Social Security subsection.

When a lump sum settlement is received as the result of a personal injury claim, and the child needs a larger reserve due to the nature or extent of the injury, a larger portion of the settlement may be held as a reserve for such child.

Unexpended funds maintained on behalf of the child that remain at the time the case is closed shall be released to the child (if over age 18 years), the parent or other legal guardian, or another designated trustee.

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### **Large Past-Due SSI Payments**

Certain large past-due SSI payments to blind or disabled children, covering more than six months of benefits, shall be paid directly into a separate ("dedicated") account in a financial institution.

Except for certain subsequent past-due payments, no other funds may be commingled into the account and money in the dedicated account shall not be countable as an SSI resource.

Interest earned on the money in a dedicated account also shall not be countable as income or a resource.

Money in a dedicated account shall be used to offset costs of care as follows:

- medical treatment and education or job skills training
- if related to the child's disability, personal needs assistance, special equipment, housing modification, and therapy or rehabilitation
- any other item or service related to the child's disability that the Department determines to be appropriate, such as the cost of improving the home to accommodate the child's impairment or legal fees incurred in establishing the child's claim for benefits. The Department shall first get approval from the local Social Security office for this category of expenses.
- past care and maintenance costs as approved by the Social Security Administration

The Trust Accounts Section of Fiscal Services shall keep a record of all money taken from this account, and receipts for all items or services bought.

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### **Notification of the Trust Account Section**

The child's Social Worker, through the Social Work Supervisor and Program Supervisor, shall notify the Trust Account Section by memo or E-Mail of the child's initial receipt of or change regarding:

- benefits
- settlement
- return to parents

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**Notification of the Trust Account Section**  
(continued)

- adoption
- marriage
- earnings
- placement with relatives
- military service
- death
- passing from care

When the child is to pass from care, the Social Worker shall notify the Trust Account Section at least three (3) months prior to the child’s eighteenth (18) birthday.

**Closure of Estate**

Upon notification from the area office with direction as to whom to transfer the estate, the Trust Account Section shall close the estate.

When the source of the estate is Social Security funds, those funds shall be returned to the Social Security Administration.

When the child...	Then...
Returns home or is placed with relatives and the commitment is revoked	<p>The area office staff shall recommend</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• whether the accrued estate shall be transferred to the parents or relatives as natural guardians, or</li> <li>• whether a legal guardian shall be appointed.</li> </ul> <p>The Department shall then notify the appropriate agency of the representative payee change.</p>
Is adopted	<p>The child’s Social Worker shall inform the adoptive parents of the existence of any benefits and an estate.</p> <p>Any funds remaining from Social Security benefits shall be returned to the Social Security Administration.</p> <p>Any funds from other sources shall be transferred to the adoptive parents.</p>
Marries and commitment is revoked	<p>The area office staff shall recommend</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• whether the proceeds of the accumulated estate shall be released to the former client, or</li> <li>• if a legal guardian shall be appointed for the estate.</li> </ul> <p>The Probate Court shall then render a decision.</p>
Passes from care	<p>The Social Worker shall instruct the client or new representative payee to submit appropriate application.</p> <p>The Trust Account Section shall return any remaining Social Security funds to the Social Security Administration.</p> <p>Any funds from other sources shall be transferred to the client, parent or designated trustee.</p>

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### Earnings and Savings by youth

All youth are to be encouraged to earn money through employment which is commensurate with their age, physical and mental capacities, available time and local employment opportunities, and which adhere to the Child Labor laws and regulations of the State of Connecticut.

Youth may receive payment for services rendered in the foster home or in employment outside the home such as newspaper routes, lawn cutting, babysitting, odd jobs, etc.

When a youth is earning money, he/she is encouraged to set aside some of the balance as savings. Approximately 50% of the balance would be a reasonable expectation and would help the youth to develop sound saving habits. There is no limit to savings. Savings accounts should be in the youth's own name and control.

**Important Note:** *Earnings and savings are not to be added to the youth's estate.*

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### Rate Setting

The Fiscal Division's Rate Setting Unit shall set rates for all in-state 24-hour facilities and programs into which DCF places children. The Rate Setting Unit shall promulgate and publish the rates. No other rates other than those published by the Unit shall be used unless prior written authorization is obtained from the Commissioner.

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### Educational Rates

The Connecticut Department of Education shall establish an educational rate for each in-state residential facility with elementary or secondary school children.

DCF shall not be responsible for payment for educational services for nexus students. Nexus student payments shall be the responsibility of the Local Education Agency (LEA). It shall be the responsibility of the program or facility to assure that its contract with the LEA covers all educational costs, including summer education.

DCF shall be responsible for payment for educational services for no-nexus students as determined by United School District #2.

Area Office Directors may approve payment for educational services for youth who have graduated from high school and are placed in congregate care facilities on a case-by-case basis.

**Cross-reference:** DCF Policy 3-2, "Education Management"

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### Procurement of One-to-One Care

DCF may authorize payment for one-to-one services for a child in a congregate care setting facility if the child is experiencing a behavioral crisis or medical emergency and requires support and care beyond that available within the contracted staffing level.

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### **Procurement of One-to-One Care** (Continued)

DCF's contracted administrative services organization ("ASO") shall manage the provision of one-to-one services consistent with utilization criteria and protocols promulgated by DCF. All requests for permission to provide one-to-one care to a child shall be made by the provider directly to the ASO using the DCF-383A, "Authorization: One-to-One Therapeutic Safety Staffing."

Providers shall submit billing invoices using the DCF-383B, "Billing Invoice: One-to-One Therapeutic Safety Staffing."

DCF shall require the ASO to provide weekly reports to Child Welfare Accounting to support provider payments and to periodically generate other data reports detailing patterns of utilization including, but not limited to, the demographics of the children for whom one-to-one services were purchased, and a roster of providers requesting this service.

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### **Eligibility for Payment for Held Beds**

DCF may make payments to a residential treatment facility or PASS group home to hold a bed for a child who is away from the facility because the child:

- left the premises without permission (is AWOL)
- has been hospitalized for the purpose of medical or psychiatric stabilization, or
- is temporarily detained in a detention center

The facility shall submit the DCF-2157, "Authorization for Held Bed," to DCF Child Welfare Accounting as follows:

- signed by the Social Worker for the first seven (7) days
- for children who require hospitalization or detention that is expected to extend beyond seven days, signed by the Program Director, for a maximum of 21 days
- for children who require hospitalization or detention that is expected to extend beyond 21 days, signed by the Area Office Director for a maximum of 28 days.

**Note:** Beds shall not be held beyond seven (7) days for children who are AWOL.

Payments for held beds will be processed in the Child Welfare Accounting Unit after the facility provides an update of the child's status after return. Facilities shall fax an updated DCF-2157 when the child returns to the program or upon mutual determination by DCF and the provider that the child will not return.

Payment shall not be made for facility vacation days unless 24-hour childcare is available for readmission.

Exceptions to this procedure may be granted if it is determined that, through no fault of the facility, the child is no longer appropriate for readmission. In such cases, the placement shall be terminated on the date the facility notifies the Area Office Social Worker, provided this notification falls within the seven-day period and is not a unilateral decision by the provider.

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### Eligibility for Payment for Held Beds (continued)

If DCF determines, during the seven-day period, that readmission is not appropriate, the child's placement shall be terminated on the day the DCF Social Worker notifies the facility, provided the termination notice does not extend beyond the current authorization period.

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### Foster Parent Claim for Damages

When a foster parent or former foster parent requests payment from DCF for damages alleged to be the result of some action by a foster child or youth residing in the home through the Community Housing Assistance Program (CHAP), the Assistant Bureau Chief of Child Welfare for the region that supports the foster home or designee shall investigate the claim to determine if:

- the allegation is more likely than not true; and
- whether the claim is for a total amount of \$5,000 or less.

If applicable, the foster parent or former foster parent shall provide a police report as part of the claim.

When a complaint has been determined to be more likely than not true and the total claim is \$5,000 or less, the Assistant Bureau Chief or designee, in consultation with the Chief Fiscal Officer or designee, shall negotiate a final payment amount with the foster parent.

The availability of insurance coverage for all or part of the claim shall be verified.

When a total claim is more than \$5,000, the Assistant Bureau Chief or designee shall refer the foster parent to the Connecticut Claims Commission.

If the Assistant Bureau Chief or designee is unable to substantiate a claim, the foster parent shall be referred to the Connecticut Claims Commission.

The procedures for filing the claim appear on the website for the Claims Commission:

**Note:** DCF staff shall not file a claim on behalf of a claimant or assist with the preparation of a claim, except to provide the claimant with a copy of this policy.

**Legal reference:** Conn. Gen. Stat. §4-141 *et seq.*

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### Connecticut Sales Tax

DCF shall not pay Connecticut sales tax on goods or services for which it makes direct payment.

Additionally, Connecticut sales tax shall not be paid for occupancy of 30 days or less in commercial lodging houses, motels, hotels, etc. The vendor shall be informed that a record of such occupancy shall be kept by retaining a copy of the invoice or receipt. The invoice or receipt may be retained by the vendor as verification of payment by DCF so that it may be exempted from payment of the tax on the room occupied by the child.

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### Use of State Vehicles

State vehicles shall be fueled at state-owned stations located throughout the State, except as provided in this policy.

**Cross reference:** Department of Administrative Services General Letter 115, "Policy For the Use Of State-Owned Motor Vehicles And Personally Owned Motor Vehicles or On State Business." Any employee may be reimbursed for gasoline expenses, if an employee on DCF business is unable to obtain fuel at a state-owned station because he or she is:

- working after hours
- in an area of the state not served by a state-owned station, or
- prevented from doing so by an emergency or other unforeseeable circumstances

The fuel purchased shall not exceed the cost of the lowest grade recommended by the automobile manufacturer.

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### Gasoline Credit Card

The Fiscal Services Division shall provide each Area Office, Careline, DCF-operated facility and Central Office unit with one or more gasoline credit cards, as needed, to be used in accordance with this policy.

The use of a card shall be monitored by a manager or designee within each office or facility. When not in use, credit cards shall be kept in a locked cabinet or drawer, accessible only to authorized staff.

A credit card may be provided to an employee whenever the responsible manager or designee determines that the employee may be unable to obtain fuel at a state-owned station. Credit cards shall be given to an employee when he or she gets the keys to the vehicle. The employee shall sign the Monthly Usage Report (CCP-40) acknowledging receipt of the keys and the credit card.

If an employee uses the credit card, he or she shall keep the receipt from the gas station and turn in the receipt, and the credit card at the end of the shift or on the next business day, with the keys to the vehicle.

Area Offices, Careline, DCF-operated facilities and Central Office units shall keep records of the use of gasoline credit cards and shall submit such reports as requested by Fiscal Services. Reports concerning the use of gasoline credit cards shall be reviewed periodically by the responsible manager, Fiscal Services or other staff as determined by the Commissioner.

Discrepancies and irregularities in the use of the credit cards shall be reported to the Human Resource Management for investigation and follow-up action.

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### Foster Care Reimbursement Structure

DCF shall operate with a reimbursement structure that implements standard per diem rates for expenses incurred on behalf of a child, except those children who qualify for the exceptional foster care rate outlined below.

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### **Foster Care Reimbursement Structure** (Continued)

The Foster Care Maintenance Payments (FCMP) rates for DCF licensed and approved caregivers (core, kinship, fictive kinship and pre-adoptive) shall be the same. FCMP shall be reviewed in conjunction with Connecticut's biennial (two-year) budget process. Recommended changes resulting from the review shall follow the state budget process.

The basis for the per diem rates shall be based on the age of the child and the current section of the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) "Expenditures on Children by Families" entitled "Estimated Annual Expenditures on a Child by Husband-Wife Families, Urban Northeast" for a family in the middle-income bracket.

The per diem rate for a minor parent with a child in the same foster home shall combine the rate for ages 0 through 5 and ages 12 and over and cover the expenses for both.

Note: The infant is not required to be committed to DCF. The uncommitted child of a committed minor parent is Title IV-E eligible for purposes of Medicaid and, therefore, Title XIX medical coverage shall be applied for on the infant's behalf.

DCF shall make the current reimbursement rate schedule available through the Office of Children and Youth in Placement.

### **USDA Categories of Expenditures**

The expenditures listed below on behalf of a child are included in the basic foster care reimbursement rate:

Housing expenses include:

- shelter:
  - mortgage and interest
  - property taxes
  - rent
  - maintenance and repairs
  - insurance
- house furnishings and equipment:
  - furniture
  - floor coverings
  - major appliances
  - small appliances
- utilities:
  - gas
  - electricity
  - fuel
  - telephone
  - water

Food expenses include:

- dining out at restaurants
- school meals
- food and non-alcoholic beverages purchased at:
  - grocery stores
  - convenience and specialty stores

**USDA  
Categories of  
Expenditures**  
(Continued)

Transportation expenses include:

- the net outlay for the purchase of new and used vehicles
- vehicle finance charges
- gasoline and motor oil
- maintenance and repairs
- insurance
- reasonable travel to remain in the school in which the child is enrolled at the time of placement (school of origin)
- public transportation
- routine transportation to before and after school activities

Clothing expenses, beyond those covered by the clothing voucher described below, include:

- children's apparel items such as:
  - shirts, pants, dresses and suits
  - footwear
  - winter apparel, including overcoat and boots
- clothing services such as:
  - dry cleaning
  - alteration and repair
  - storage

Education, childcare and other miscellaneous expenses include:

- elementary and high school tuition, books and supplies
- daycare tuition and supplies
- babysitting
- personal care items
- entertainment
- reading material

In addition to what is covered by the USDA rate, DCF shall include the following additional expenses in the basic foster care reimbursement structure:

- spending allowance
- music, dance and other lessons, such as karate
- driver education classes
- school uniforms
- summer camp
- vacations
- vocational and trade school supplies
- recreational equipment

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### **Clothing Vouchers**

DCF shall provide the foster parent or facility staff with a clothing voucher to provide for the necessary clothing at the time a child is placed in DCF care. The initial clothing voucher amount shall not exceed \$300.00 without the prior approval of the Program Supervisor. The amount approved shall represent the allowance given for a child who is without an adequate supply or has no clothing at all at the time of placement.

The Social Worker may request an increase in the initial voucher amount from the Program Supervisor for emergency and immediate clothing needs only when the child's clothing needs have been assessed costing more than \$300.

Clothing vouchers shall not be used for purchases made after placement because this expense is included in the per diem rate. In the event the subsequent cost for clothing is significantly higher than average, the Social Worker shall obtain approval for the use of wraparound funds to purchase necessary clothing.

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### **Payments to Foster Families for Vacations**

Monies for vacations for a foster child are included in the foster care stipend. However, there may be unusual situations when taking a foster child on a vacation with the foster family would create a financial hardship for the foster parents. In these situations, in lieu of placing the foster child with a respite care provider, the foster parent may request approval to use respite care money to enable the foster child to accompany the family on vacation. If the request is approved, the foster parent shall receive payment equaling up to an annual maximum of 14 days of respite care money.

**Note:** The foster family shall not be entitled to respite care monies not actually used for the foster child's vacation expenses.

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### **Exceptional Foster Care Rate**

The per diem rate for children with complex medical needs shall be different from the basic foster care rate and shall be used to provide reimbursement of costs incurred for those foster children who meet the complex medical needs criteria on an ongoing basis.

In order to receive initial approval for a rate for complex medical needs, the child's Social Worker shall submit the DCF-2101, "Certification of Child's Complex Medical Needs," to the RRG Nurse, Social Work Supervisor and Program Supervisor for review and approval.

The child's complex medical needs status and rate shall be reviewed at the following times:

- at each six-month Administrative Case Review using the current DCF-2101, medical notes in the case record and the health forms in the Placement Portfolio; and
- whenever there is a change in the child's medical condition.

Whenever there is a change in the child's medical condition, which may cause a change in the rate, a new DCF-2101 shall be signed by the primary health care provider and submitted for review and approval.

Cross-reference: 21-5-2, "Certification of Child's Complex Medical Needs"

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**Wraparound Funds**

DCF shall provide wraparound funds to obtain needed exceptional services or goods. These exceptional services:

- are intended to enhance family preservation and reunification
- are individualized
- are time-limited
- cannot be used to supplant existing services

Wraparound funds may be used for the benefit of any child or biological, foster, relative or adoptive family that has an open case with DCF, except for:

- educational expenses included in a child’s Individualized Education Plan
- medical expenses exceeding the rate available through Medicaid, if applicable
- services by private providers that are already grant-funded by DCF
- other goods or services, the funding of which is covered by state law or DCF policy (e.g., daycare)

Wraparound funds may be utilized in the following circumstances:

- to reduce risk factors and permit children to remain in their own homes
- to delay entry of children into out-of-home care thereby allowing time for a more planned placement
- to reduce the length of stay in out-of-home care
- to provide timely support and resources for families

The Area Offices may purchase services or goods through contracted and non-contracted means.

**Cross-reference:** DCF Policy 21-20, “USE Plans.”

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**Home and Vehicle Modifications**

To permit children with physical or medical disabilities to live in foster and adoptive homes instead of institutions and group homes, DCF may provide wraparound funding, within available appropriations, to facilitate modifications to foster or prospective adoptive homes or to vehicles to remove barriers that prevent children from participating fully in the family and community.

To be eligible for consideration under this policy:

- a child shall be committed to DCF or free for adoption with the Commissioner as the statutory parent
- have physical or medical disabilities which are barriers for placement in a foster or prospective adoptive home
- have an identified foster or prospective adoptive home, licensed or approved by DCF and in good standing, that is willing to take the child if the modifications are made or is unable to maintain the child in the home unless the modifications are made

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**Home and Vehicle Modifications**  
(continued)

A foster home may be eligible for modifications even if there is no currently identified child if the family is licensed or approved and in good standing and has stated that it is willing to be a foster parent or respite provider for eligible children.

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**Home and Vehicle Modification Committee**

DCF shall establish a multi-disciplinary Home Vehicle Modification Committee (HVMC) for the purpose of prioritizing requests for these funds. In prioritizing these requests, the HVMC shall consider:

- the available amount of funding
- the likelihood that permanency will be achieved by the modification
- the likelihood that the child could be placed in a comparable setting without modification
- development of a "pool" of foster parents with homes equipped to care for children with physical disabilities for foster placement or respite

The HVMC shall be headed by the Chief Fiscal Officer of DCF or designee. Additional members of the HVMC shall include representatives from:

- Child Welfare Accounting
- Children and Youth in Placement
- Health Management
- Engineering
- Legal Affairs
- such others as the committee deems necessary

The HVMC shall meet as needed to review requests for funds.

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**Request for Home and Vehicle Modification Funding**

Whenever a child is identified as being able to benefit from modifications to a foster or prospective adoptive home or a vehicle owned by a foster or prospective adoptive family that is used to transport the child, the Area Office Director or Program Director shall send a memo requesting funds to the Chief Fiscal Officer.

The memo shall include:

- whether or not the child is currently in the home
  - description of the child's physical or medical disabilities
  - description of the nature of the modification(s) requested
  - the reason for the requested modification(s)
  - credit reports, tax returns and statements from the mortgage or vehicle loan lender that the mortgage or loan is current
  - proof from the municipality that the property taxes have been paid
  - proof that the value of the house or vehicle exceeds the outstanding balances of all outstanding mortgages and loans
  - a printout from the Judicial website as to whether there are civil actions or judgments against the foster parents, including foreclosure proceedings; and
  - brief summary of the family's financial viability.
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### **Required PT/OT Evaluation**

The specific modification(s) being requested and the reason for the requested modification(s) shall be supported by an evaluation of the child by a qualified physical or occupational therapist arranged by the Area Office.

The evaluation shall provide recommendations regarding what is needed to integrate the child safely into the home. For home modifications, the recommendations shall include but not be limited to, entrances and exits to the home, widening of door frames to accommodate a wheelchair and whether a handicapped accessible bathroom for the child is required.

The Social Worker, the Regional Resource Group Nurse and a representative from Engineering shall be present during this evaluation to ensure all parties have a full understanding of the project.

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### **Restrictions for Home and Vehicle Modification**

If the home or vehicle is old and needs substantial upgrading to accommodate the child or is configured in such a way that it is unable to accommodate the needs of the child without major structural changes, then it is likely the home or vehicle cannot be modified and a request for approval of the modifications shall not be granted.

No additions to homes shall be approved; DCF shall work within the existing home's "blueprint."

No home modifications shall be approved for homes outside the State of Connecticut.

Requests for modifications to a rental property shall be approved on a very limited basis and are subject to the property owner's written approval.

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### **When Bids are Required for Home and Vehicle Modification**

If the cost of the modifications is estimated to be more than \$5,000, the foster parent shall obtain three bids from qualified contractors. A listing of approved contractors shall be provided by Engineering to the foster parent. The Social Worker shall forward the three bids to Engineering.

DCF Engineering shall develop a Scope of Work based on the PT/OT evaluation recommendations and forward it to the Social Worker with instructions from DCF Engineering regarding a pre-bid walk through of the home.

DCF Engineering shall be present at the pre-bid walk through to ensure that all interested contractors bid on the exact same project specifications.

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### **Responsibilities of the Modification Committee**

At each meeting of the HVMC, it shall review modification requests and may either approve or reject such plans, or may request additional information from the Area Office, or seek additional information from other sources such as an architect.

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### **Responsibilities of the Modification Committee** (continued)

If the HVMC finds that the modification is necessary to permit a child to be placed in a foster or prospective adoptive home or is necessary to maintain such a placement, and that the modifications are reasonable, it shall notify the Area Office that the project is pre-approved subject to receipt of information concerning design, costs, bids, etc.

For projects estimated to be over \$5,000, the HVMC shall review all bids submitted and shall select one based on cost, quality of the proposal, reputation of the contractor, reasonableness of the time frame for completion and such other factors as the HVMC deems appropriate.

After a project is approved and a bid accepted, if applicable, the HVMC shall notify the Area Office, which shall then notify the foster or prospective adoptive family.

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### **Agreement with Family for Home and Vehicle Modification**

After a vendor is selected, Child Welfare Accounting shall draft an agreement to be signed by the family and the Commissioner or designee.

The agreement shall describe the child who will benefit from the modification and the foster or pre-adoptive family, describe the modification, the cost, the conditions under which the funds shall be awarded, the conditions under which the funds will be reimbursed, and such other terms and conditions as the HVMC deems necessary.

Following approval of the project and prior to commencing construction or modification, the foster or prospective adoptive parent and the contractor shall meet with the DCF Engineering to review the project.

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### **Payment to Vendor for Home and Vehicle Modification**

Payments for the modification project shall be made by Child Welfare Accounting directly to the vendor of the service.

Prior to final payment:

- a DCF representative shall inspect the work to ensure that services were performed in accordance with the scope of work
  - the foster parent shall provide DCF with a Certificate of Occupancy
  - the vendor shall provide an invoice in order to receive payment
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