

CHAPTER 11 – REIMBURSEMENT, BOARD PAYMENTS, TRAVEL, AND OTHER ACTIVITIES AND EXPENSES



A. EXPENDITURE REIMBURSEMENT PROCESS

Foster caregivers are allowed to purchase items on behalf of a child in foster care, but should be advised to obtain prior approval from the caseworker to ensure the purchase qualifies for reimbursement. The caregiver should request reimbursement by submitting a CW Form 435, Caregiver's Supplementary Expenditure Affidavit, each month. Sales receipts must be attached, verifying the purchase of all items in excess of \$1, except transportation in the caregiver's automobile. Receipts must include the items purchased, date of purchase, amount, and should be signed by the seller or have the name of the vendor printed on it. Separate original receipts are needed for each child.

The caseworker will review each CW 435 Form and the attached receipts. Receipts older than three months (90 days), from the date of purchase, will not be reimbursed. If the receipts are in order and the expenditures are within limits, the caseworker shall authorize reimbursement on the TIPS 211, Provider Manual Payment.

B. MEDICAL REIMBURSEMENTS

Please keep in mind that most medical expenses are covered by the child's medical card. The child's medical card may not cover certain prescription drugs and medical emergencies. In these situations, it is preferable for the medical providers to bill the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) directly. The DCFS will forward to the medical provider the appropriate payment forms, when services are not covered by Medicaid or the child's private insurance. Foster caregivers can be reimbursed, with approval from the caseworker, if the child requires immediate medical services.

C. BOARD PAYMENTS

Monthly board payments are paid to certified caregivers for the children placed in their homes. Board payments are intended to help meet the daily needs of the child for shelter, food, clothing, allowance, and incidental expenses. Payment for the care of children and youth, in foster care, is made once a month. The board payment is deposited during the middle of the month for care provided the preceding month. The board payment is computed at a daily rate. Therefore, the board payment will vary slightly in amount according to the number of days in a month.

The monthly board payments shall not be used by caregivers for expenditures not related to the daily needs of the child. Any funds, which are not, used within the month, such as the clothing allotment, child's allowance, personal items or gift allowance should be held, for the child, to be utilized when needed by them. All unused funds remain the property of the child, and should follow him to the next placement or be provided to him at the time of discharge from foster care. The following describes each component of the rate:

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Room and Board is to defer part of the cost for the child to reside in the home and the provision of food. The room and board amount is based upon the United States Department of Agriculture estimates of the cost of raising a child and budget appropriation from the state legislature.

Clothing Allowance is used as needed for clothing, school uniforms, footwear, and other clothing items as needed. Clothing should be purchased new and in keeping with community standards as appropriate to the age of the child.

Monthly allowance - The purpose of an allowance is to help the child and youth, in foster care, learn to handle money. Allowances are to be paid directly to age appropriate child in foster care. For children that are not age appropriate to receive an allowance, the money should be placed into a savings account or used directly for items for the infant or child. This is to occur each month for all children, ages 0 through 17.

Personal items allowance is to cover personal items such as haircuts, hair styling and braiding, toiletries, and other items for personal use by children and youth in foster care.

Gift allowance is to be used to purchase gifts for the child.

The board rate is separated into four age groups. The following is a breakdown of the average board payment based on the age of the child.

Birth up to Age 2 years (\$19.47 per day)	\$392.10	Room and Board
	\$76.87	Diapers and Formula
	\$76.87	Clothing
	\$12.15	Monthly Allowance
	\$19.22	Personal Items
	\$6.89	Gift Allowance

	\$584.10	Average Monthly Payment
Age 2 through Age 5 years (\$16.95 per day)	\$393.17	Room and Board
	\$76.78	Clothing
	\$12.41	Monthly Allowance
	\$19.22	Personal Items
	\$6.92	Gift Allowance

	\$508.50	Average Monthly Payment
Age 6 through Age 12 years (\$18.69 per day)	\$405.39	Room and Board
	\$92.18	Clothing
	\$37.00	Monthly Allowance

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	\$19.23	Personal Items
	\$6.90	Gift Allowance

	\$560.70	Average Monthly Payment
Age 13 years or older	\$438.88	Room and Board
(\$20.86 per day)	\$100.38	Clothing
	\$58.32	Monthly Allowance
	\$20.40	Personal Items
	\$7.82	Gift Allowance

	\$625.80	Average Monthly Payment

The caseworker should discuss a breakdown of the board rate and its allocated purposes with the caregiver at each monthly visit.

D. SPECIAL BOARD PAYMENTS

In addition to receiving the regular board rate, DCFS foster homes, Private Foster Care (PFC) Homes and Specialized Family Foster Homes may receive an additional **Special Board** compensation for child(ren) in foster care. Special board requires assessment of the child’s characteristics and behaviors to provide compensation to the foster caregiver based on the special needs of the child as it relates to their observable condition. Special board shall be assessed upon entry into foster care and continually assessed throughout the child’s placement. Once qualified, the foster care caseworker will reassess the child’s characteristics and behaviors to adjust the special board at least every six months. The re-assessment may determine if it is possible to increase, reduce, or eliminate the special board. The foster care worker shall complete the Special Board Request Form on behalf of the foster caregiver.

Alternate Family Care (AFC) homes may receive a special board under specific circumstances. Treatment Foster Homes Alternate Family Care/Therapeutic Foster Care and Medical Therapeutic Foster Care Programs. Diagnostic and Assessment (D&A) homes do not receive special board payments.

E. ALLOWANCES

The purpose of an allowance is to help the child, in foster care, learn to handle money. The Agency provides an allowance for the child in his monthly board payment. The monthly allowance is to be paid directly to an age appropriate child, or placed in a piggy bank or account, if the child is not paid directly. **This is to occur each month for all children, ages 0 through 17.**

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The child should be helped to use his money wisely and to plan ahead for purchases. This is an excellent time to introduce the benefits of saving money in a savings account or other secure locations. This allowance is not for school lunches, personal items such as toothpaste, shampoo or deodorant and should never be withheld from him.

When a child deliberately causes damage to property, the child can be expected to pay for the damages out of his monthly allowance with the approval of the supervisor. The child should participate in the development of a payment plan. The supervisor must approve the plan for payment of damages by the child. The payment plan shall be for a portion, but not all, of the child's allowance each month until the agreed upon amount is paid. If the child has earnings, a portion of the earnings may be used in the payment plan. If the child reimburses damages, a request shall not be made to the agency also for reimbursement.

Foster caregivers may give a child in foster care extra spending money for special occasions if they wish. You should not ask the child to use his money for certain things, such as, when the whole family goes to buy ice cream or to the movies and you are treating everyone else; you should treat the child in foster care also.

F. GIFT ALLOWANCE

The DCFS provides a small amount of money in the monthly board payment for gifts to be purchased for the child. You may want to spend more on Christmas and birthdays, as you will want the child to be treated as equally as possible with others in the home.

Foster caregivers, by nature, are giving people and want to share not only their home and emotional love, but also, wish to give gifts to the child. When gifts are given to the child, those gifts become his possessions to take with him when he leaves the foster home; the gift should be moveable and separate from other persons. Many foster children do not have possessions of their own. Gifts received, on special occasions, provide the child the opportunity to collect personal possessions.

Gifts should be given with no "strings attached".

G. TRANSPORTING CHILDREN

Foster caregivers, whether certified or non-certified, shall comply with all state laws for vehicle safety including current car inspections, liability car insurance and child passenger restraint systems or car seats. Child passenger restraint systems shall be provided, by the Agency, for all children in care when required by age and size to comply with law and safety practices. Any car seat, or other passenger restraint system, purchased by the Agency becomes the property of the child just as any other purchase made on his behalf, e.g., clothing. The only exception, to the passenger restraint system being the child's

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personal possession, would be when a child is no longer required by law to use a child passenger restraint system. If the car seat is in good, usable condition, and there is another child in care currently in the same home or another home who needs the passenger restraint system, the foster caregiver or caseworker may give the system to the other child or return the system to the local office for use by the Agency. When a caseworker places a child in a home, they are responsible for explaining the child restraint law requirements at the time of the establishment of the care setting. If a relative/kin caregiver requires a restraint system for a child placed in their home, the caseworker shall purchase the restraint system. The most cost-efficient restraint system should be purchased..

Daily transportation is the responsibility of the caregiver. Transportation for routine travel, such as shopping or daily activities is not reimbursable. The caregiver may be reimbursed for transportation expenses under the following circumstances:

- Required or allowed by DCFS for the welfare of the child for medical and other professional appointments, authorized family visits or Family Team Meetings (FTM) within the state.
- Free transportation to school is not available and the local school board will not reimburse the foster caregiver. (Applicable for public school enrollment only; transportation expenses are not reimbursable for private school, NOR are they allowed when a foster caregiver CHOOSES to transport the child.)

To claim mileage expenses, the odometer reading of the trip must be submitted. Should more than one child be involved in the trip, e.g., sibling to a visit, children to medical appointment, etc., the trip mileage is to be divided between all involved children. An example is two children are taken to the doctor's office and the round trip is 12 miles. Six miles would be claimed for each child on the reimbursement form. CW Form 435, provided by the agency, is to be completed by the foster caregivers for reimbursement. A separate Form 435 should be completed on each child. Be sure to consult and discuss with the caseworker, allowable expenses and amounts.

H. VACATIONS AND TRAVEL

DCFS wants to ensure travel away from the child's normal care setting occurs in a manner supporting the safety, permanency, and well-being of the child, as well as, providing for normalcy in accordance with his best interests.

General Travel Guidelines

- An adult must accompany a child in care in all travel situations.
- The child's caseworker, supervisor, or other DCFS staff is responsible for accompanying the child in any travel involving changing care settings.

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- Placement of the child, by an accompanying caseworker, supervisor or other DCFS staff, must occur in the care setting, not at a train station, airport, etc.
- Official picture identification must be viewed by individual accompanying a child or youth in care, during travel, prior to releasing him to another party.
- DCFS staff must ensure all financial needs of the child are accounted for and appropriate authorization received prior to approving, or executing, the travel episode.
- Staff, traveling out of state, with or without a child or youth, in care, must have DCFS appointing authority approval prior to crossing state lines in performance with job duties.
- Approval must be obtained from DCFS appointing authority prior to taking state property, e.g. state vehicles, across state lines.

Travel of Caregivers Without the Child or Youth in Care

If the family will be traveling for an extended time, without the child, in care, accompanying them, the caregivers are to inform the caseworker of alternate childcare arrangements.

I. SOCIALIZATION, RECREATION, AND DEVELOPMENTAL ACTIVITIES

The maximum socialization, recreation, and developmental funding for children age six (6) through seventeen (17) may vary based on availability of funding and may be spent for the child to participate in formalized developmental or socialization activities. It is not expected that such expenditures will be made on behalf of every child. The caseworker and caregiver are to purposefully plan the activity to meet the child's need in a specific area such as building self-confidence, physical coordination, or improving peer interactions.

As reimbursable expenses are limited, activities should be selected through joint discussion with the assigned caseworker, caregiver, and child (if age appropriate). Authorization from the caseworker must be obtained prior to any purchases. The identified needs of the child, selected activities and use of developmental and socialization funds should be included in his case plan.

No more than \$900, per calendar year, may be expended, per child, to support a developmental or socialization need. Allowable activities include summer camps, community organization/church/school sponsored trips, membership in organizations such as Scouts or community sports teams and similar activities; or self-improvement or skill classes in music, art, dance, gymnastics, or other physical development activities, including swimming lessons. Funds may be used, if more appropriate, to purchase items needed to participate in developmental or socialization activities. Summer camp shall be limited to \$300 per year and social activities shall be limited to \$600 per year.

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The following kinds of items/activities are not allowed:

- Items that cannot be physically moved with the child and that are not necessary for organized social or developmental activity;
- TV, VCR, Stereo, Electronic devices (X-Box, etc.);
- Birthday parties, birthday gifts or Christmas gifts;
- Family or group vacation trips including senior trips; and
- Toys, video games, board games, bicycle, etc. (Note: If the youth is a member of an organized group, such as a bicycling club for the purpose of building peer relationships or promoting physical development, and a bicycle is required for participation, then a bicycle would be permissible.)

J. MISCELLANEOUS EXPENDITURES

The assigned caseworker may approve minimal purchases necessary to provide for the safety, permanency, and well-being of the child. The following items may be claimed as incidental expenses.

Long distance telephone calls made on behalf of the foster child in accordance with the child's case plan – such as phone calls to arrange appointments for the child and calls to the office to discuss the child. The Agency does not pay for unauthorized phone calls made by the foster child on the caregiver's phone.

A suitcase for each child, entering foster care, up to \$125.00.

Initial placement incidental purchases for such items as shampoo, sanitary napkins, deodorant, shaving cream, toothbrush, make-up, etc., up to \$40 per year, can be purchased for the child. Contact the caseworker for the allowable amount if you plan to seek reimbursement of these purchases. These expenses are only reimbursed at the child's initial entry into foster care.