

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT DIVISION
Workforce Program Policy
Technical Assistance Bulletin 293

Keyword: SNAP E&T; TANF/Choices; WIOA

Subject: Transportation Services—*Update*

Date: January 14, 2020

This Technical Assistance (TA) Bulletin provides Local Workforce Development Boards (Boards) with:

- information on the use of funds for transportation and transportation-related expenses;
- lists of allowable transportation services;
- best practice recommendations for transportation policies; and
- examples of Board transportation policies and other transportation strategies.

Program funds allocated to Boards to provide transportation or other support services for eligible customers in workforce programs are the following:

- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)/Choices
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training (SNAP E&T)
- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth

TANF/Choices funds for transportation services:

- are allowable for post-employment/job retention services for former TANF recipients; and
- may be provided to:
 - foster career advancement;
 - assist in preventing former recipients from returning to TANF cash assistance; and
 - enable Choices individuals to work, attend, and participate in required Choices services.

Allowable Transportation Services for Eligible Customers

The following are allowable for all SNAP E&T mandatory or exempt recipients:

- Bus passes/tokens/tickets (issued daily, weekly, or monthly)
- Basic cash allowance
- Prepaid gas cards
- Toll road charges
- Mileage reimbursement (personal vehicles only)
- Car pools
- Minor car repairs

- Ride services (for example, taxicabs, Uber, and Lyft)
- Contracts with private entities, such as transit providers that provide shuttle or van services
- Driver's license fees (includes renewals)
- Purchase of tires or automobile batteries (not allowable for exempt recipients)

The following are allowable transportation services for all eligible TANF/Choices and WIOA customers:

- Bus passes/tokens/tickets (issued daily, weekly, or monthly)
- Basic cash allowance
- Prepaid gas cards
- Toll road charges
- Mileage reimbursement (personal vehicles only)
- Car pools
- Minor car repairs
- Ride services (for example, taxicabs, Uber, and Lyft)
- Contracts with private entities, such as transit providers that provide shuttle or van services
- Car insurance
- Driver's license fees (includes renewals)
- Vehicle inspection fees
- One-time short-term assistance
- Contracting with private organizations or services to refurbish previously owned cars
- Financial support (loans or grants) that enables customers to purchase a vehicle
- Purchase of tires or automobile batteries

Car insurance, vehicle inspection fees, and vehicle registration fees are not allowable transportation services for SNAP E&T customers. WD Letter 06-17, issued February 7, 2017, and titled "Change in Use of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training Funds for Transportation-Related Support Services," provides further guidance on the use of SNAP E&T funding for car insurance, vehicle inspection, fees and vehicle registration fees.

Additionally, it is important to remember the following:

- Basic cash allowances issued for transportation services to unemployed TANF recipients and SNAP E&T customers count as unearned income unless the cash allowance provided is specifically for reimbursement for past or anticipated future transportation expenses.
- Transportation services must be entered into the appropriate Support Services tab in The Workforce Information System of Texas (TWIST).
- Support services for WIOA youth are participatory and will prevent exit. If WIOA youth are no longer participating in the WIOA youth program, the Follow-Up Support Service (TWIST Service Code #108) is used.

Best Practice Recommendations for Transportation Policies

- When developing or reviewing transportation policies, consider current economic circumstances, such as:
 - fluctuating gas prices;
 - higher costs to repair vehicles or purchase tires;
 - increases in bus fares; and
 - increases in travel costs for customers who travel longer distances for work activities and longer distances to and from jobsites and child care facilities.
- When developing transportation policies, remember to provide funding for transportation services that are reasonable; necessary; and directly related to participation in work-based services, education and training services, post-employment services (with the exception of SNAP E&T), and access to child care services. Additionally, consider:
 - not specifying limitations on the dollar amount per customer for a set time frame based on the type of transportation (for example, limiting customers to \$20 for a bus pass in a 12-month period);
 - allowing for special circumstances that might be encountered, including changes to the local economy—rather than setting specific expenditure limitations that apply to all customers; and
 - determining time frame limitations for eligible customers on a case-by-case basis.
- Except for restricting funds available for transportation services, placing unnecessary restrictions on the use of funds for transportation services might:
 - cause undue hardships for customers who do not receive transportation assistance until after they have met certain participation requirements;
 - place additional administrative burdens on Workforce Solutions Office staff members, who are required to verify whether public transportation is a more beneficial or economical mode of transportation than the use of a personal vehicle; and
 - require Workforce Solutions Office staff to collect unnecessary documentation to prove that the customer used the funds as intended.

Examples of Board Transportation Policies and Other Transportation Strategies

- Setting a maximum amount per customer without specifying the type of transportation service funded (for example, customers may be eligible to receive up to \$75 per week, which may be issued in the form of prepaid gas cards, bus fares, mileage reimbursements, taxicab and ride share services, car pool expenses, or any other costs related to public transportation. The maximum amount may be adjusted to reflect the local economy and fund limitations). Gas receipts are not necessary if prepaid gas cards are issued, and customers may submit a weekly job search log as verification when receiving mileage reimbursements for personal vehicles. In order to receive a reimbursement for mileage, employed individuals—or those receiving training services—may submit a map from websites such as Google Maps or MapQuest that automatically map the routes and show the amount of mileage the customer travels to and from a place of employment, a training site, and/or a child care facility.

- Providing up-front transportation stipends to customers who are beginning work-related activities (for example, offering prepaid gas cards and/or bus fares).
- Setting limitations on amounts provided for car repairs or other expenses related to car maintenance but allowing the option to approve additional car repair costs if needed and if justified from documentation. (For example, customers may receive up to \$500 for car repairs or other expenses related to car maintenance with approved documentation. The maximum amount may be adjusted if the customer provides justifiable proof of need.)
- Requiring customers to sign an assurance that funds provided for transportation services will be used as intended. Customers should be notified that they are to use the most economical or most appropriate modes of transportation to best fit their needs, thus eliminating the need for Workforce Solutions Office staff to investigate the various transportation services available for customers in the area.
- Ensuring that the issuance of transportation funds reflects and accounts for any trips to and from child care facilities.
- Entering into contracts with urban or rural transit providers or shuttle services for new or expanded transportation services benefiting eligible customers, provided that such costs are necessary and reasonable. (Funds cannot be used to upgrade or maintain transit vehicles.)
- Identifying customers with reliable personal vehicles and paying them to pick up other individuals in their area who are going to the same child care facility, place of employment, or training site. Participating riders pay a fare, or customers using their personal vehicles are paid a set monthly amount.
- Partnering with other agencies or nonprofit organizations through a vehicle resource cost-sharing agreement to provide transportation services based on fixed routes that connect individuals to:
 - job and training sites;
 - outpatient mental health or substance abuse treatment centers; and
 - services for individuals with disabilities.

Please distribute this information to appropriate staff. Send inquiries regarding this TA Bulletin to wfpolicy.clarifications@twc.state.tx.us.

RESCISSIONS:

TA Bulletin 178, Change 3