

# Moving Forward

## Flexible Funds Policy

### *I. General Overview and Purpose*

Flexible funds will be made available to case management staff or staff functioning in a case management capacity to assist youth and young adults in accessing necessary personal supports and other services to *prevent crisis*, and to maximize opportunities for them to remain in their homes and communities. These funds are to be used for direct purchase of support services and resources necessary to ensure that youth can remain safely in their home setting and communities.

The support service or resources needed must be individualized to the particular needs of the youth/young adult *within the current treatment plan* for that youth/young adult. The decisions for how flexible funds are spent are generally made in the context of team meetings within specified guidelines of The Moving Forward Initiative. ***It is the responsibility of the case manager, and the Case Management Program to educate families, youth and team members about the use of flexible funds consistent with the specified guidelines of the Moving Forward Initiative.***

Flexible funds are intended to be short-term, and cover the cost of a particular service/resource when no other funding stream is available, or when the need is imminent and undertaking the process of accessing more traditional streams of funding will compromise the youth/family safety. Flexible funds help to bridge gaps, and are intended to be consistent with the principle of sustainability, that is, the ability of the family, youth, community, and service system to continue the needed service/resource over the long term. ***In general, these funds should be utilized after all other avenues for service authorizations or payments have been exhausted by the family, the youth, the case manager and the treatment team.***

TIP is a way of providing individually tailored supports and services. TIP supports and services are creative and flexible in accessing natural supports and community resources. Flexible funds may be used to support parts of a TIP plan. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- One-time diagnosis and assessment
- Transportation to therapy services
- Time-limited or specialized activities
- Car repairs, rent, utility bill
- Items to ensure safety in the home, such as door alarms or gates

These funds are for youth and young adults enrolled in TIP. Case managers making requests agree to use a flexible fund request form, and to submit this to the Moving Forward Operations Coordinator for approval.

Child and Family Teams may authorize the use of flexible funds for expenditures up to

\$ 500 per calendar year. Individuals who can approve these authorizations include the Moving Forward Operations Coordinator, or other designated member of the Moving Forward team.

## ***II. Guidelines for Use of Flexible Funds***

Flexible funds must be tied either to efforts to help the youth/young adult maintain a safe environment in their home, to maintain their living arrangement, or for efforts that seek to strengthen family relationships and/or youth relations within their community. Any expenditure that cannot be shown to contribute to these larger goals should be considered an inappropriate use of flexible funds. A list of Pre-Approved uses of TIP flexible funds can be found in **Section V**.

When considering the use of flexible funds the youth or young person's treatment, the treatment team must ask:

1. How would this expenditure prevent or reduce the risk of homelessness due to the youth/young adult's emotional disturbance?
2. How would this expenditure improve family relationships and promote family strength?
3. How would it promote youth relations within the community and youth strengths for those youth in transition?
4. Have all other sources of funding for this resource been exhausted by youth or young person's treatment team?
5. If this resource is considered necessary in the long term, is there a plan for how this resource or a similar resource will be paid once services are no longer involved, in other words, sustained?
6. Is the request family driven, youth guided, culturally sensitive and trauma informed?
7. How does this expenditure promote positive youth/young adult development and stability in the community?
8. How does this promote a stronger community?

The youth or young person's treatment team should strive to stabilize the living situation of the family and or youth/young adult so that the youth/young adult will be successful living in the community. One of the purposes of TIP is to model how resources and supports are accessed in the community. In this way, family members, youth, and young adults learn how to access available community resources for themselves in the future when case management services are no longer in place.

## ***III. Child & Family Process***

The individualized service plan will be created by the team and support services and resources will be individualized, built on strengths, and meet the needs of the youth and young adults across the life domains to promote success, safety and permanency. This process will be family driven, youth guided, culturally sensitive and trauma informed building upon the values,

preferences and strengths of the youth, young adults, families and their communities. This plan is collaborative and inclusive of community and neighborhood providers and supports chosen by the youth/young adult or other team members with the youth/young adult's permission. The plan will balance both formal and informal supports and resources with an eventual greater inclusion of informal supports. The youth/young adult, with the support of their treatment team will decide on the goals for each plan of care and the outcomes and actions that will be needed to reach those goals. The case manager will facilitate team discussion around resources needed to implement the plan. *It should not be assumed that flexible funds will always be used to fund a plan.*

If in the course of this discussion the team agrees that no other resources are available to achieve and support the overarching goal of keeping youth/young adult in the home/community and strengthening the relationships among family members or peers, flexible funds and the needed amount will be listed in the care plan as an authorized request by the team. The case manager will be listed on the plan as being the person responsible for filing the required paperwork to access funds, to follow through on obtaining those funds, and of ensuring use consistent with the application for the funds.

#### ***IV. Fiscal Procedures and Policy***

Funds are kept in a checking account and managed by The Operations Coordinator. An account is used to keep record of all money allocated, noting amount spent, items or services purchased, how it helped to reach treatment goals, and individuals receiving monies. Requests for funds will be made by completing a ***request form***. The Operations Coordinator will process check requests in a timely manner. Monthly reports are kept and copies are given to the Accounting Department.

#### ***V. List of Pre-Approved Uses for Wraparound Funds***

The maximum amount is \$ 500 per enrolled youth/young adult per calendar year. Some preapproved activities are as follows:

- Collateral Contact Time at Meetings: This includes the payment to formal or informal service providers when needed for their time and transportation costs to attend treatment team meetings
- Direct Care Services: These are services to youth/young adults that may include clinical and treatment services not paid for by MaineCare. These funds can also be used as payment for direct care services for uninsured/underinsured youth/young adults.

- Case Consultation: The hiring of independently contracted professionals who are experts in their fields to provide written evaluation and treatment recommendations not paid by or beyond the amount allotted by the insurance provider. Examples of this may be the hiring of an educational advocate, psychologist, a behavior specialist, or a parenting coach or mentor. The rate will be based on standard Maine Care rates. When a rate does not exist the standard will be considered the average professional rate for that service.
- Short Term **Emergency** Needs: Short-term (less than 3 months) or one-time expenditures that enable youth and young people to obtain appropriate care and safety. Examples of short-term emergency needs may include food, utilities, general household costs, clothing, car repair, and/or housing assistance to prevent homelessness.
- Transportation: Allotment of gas cards and taxi or bus vouchers to enable youth and youth to attend medical appointments, meetings, therapy appointments, and recreational activities listed in the plan of care. Mileage reimbursement may also be requested.
- Furniture & or Safety Purchases: Authorization of necessary furniture *purchases specified in the plan of care* that may have been damaged or lacking due to the disability of the enrolled child, or efforts to maintain the youth/young adult in their home.
- Home Alterations: Alterations to the home that are authorized to ensure safety. However flexible funds may not be used for capital expenditures, major home improvements, repairs, renovations, or other such items.
- One-time assistance with car insurance premiums, initial down payments or monthly household expenses may be considered. *All such uses of flexible funds should be considered within the context of this policy and as part of a plan of care that include long term strategies to link with appropriate community organizations for budget planning, financial counseling, etc.*
- Flexible funds may be utilized to provide temporary family/youth/young adult assistance such as with utilities, rent, car repair, health insurance co-pays etc., in order to stabilize an emergent family/youth situation with supporting justification. All such uses of flexible funds should be considered within the context of this policy and as part of a plan of care with long term strategies to link with appropriate community organizations for budget planning, financial counseling, etc.

