



NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT
OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

New Jersey Department of Children and Families Policy Manual

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Chapter:	A	Independent Living	6-30-2016
Subchapter:	2	Stipends	
Issuance:	200	Independent Living Stipends	

Purpose:

This issuance establishes policies and procedures on the independent living rent, food, and incidental stipends. These prospective payments are offered in furtherance of a youth's goals and/or as a supplement to his or her income.

Policy:

A) Eligibility for the Rent, Food, and Incidental Stipends

Adolescents 16 -17 years of age in an independent living placement and young adults ages 18 up to 21 living in an independent living arrangement [CP&P-VI-A-1-101](#) are eligible for one or more of the three stipends (rent, food or incidentals) under the following circumstances:

- He or she is 18 up to 21 and has agreed to and signed the Voluntary Services Agreement CP&P [Form 10-10](#) and is in compliance with the expectations outlined therein including participation in the development of the Transitional Plan for YOUth Success CP&P [Form 5-43](#);
- His or her income is less than 150% of the Federal Poverty Income Guidelines for a family of one (see the Federal Poverty Income Guidelines at <http://aspe.hhs.gov/>); and
- He or she has agreed to and signed the Independent Living Stipend Responsibility Agreement CP&P [Form 10-7](#).

In addition, prior to any adolescent, age 16 or 17, to receive the independent living stipend, a documented case conference with the Worker, Supervisor, Casework Supervisor and Local Office Manager occurs that gives approval for the adolescent to receive the agreed upon stipend(s).

A youth in a licensed resource home or congregate care placement is not considered an independent living placement and therefore is not eligible for the independent living stipend. There are DCF supportive housing programs that support some expenses for 16 to 21 year olds residing in a program.

Note: Please see the attached:

- 1) Housing Grid that outlines eligibility for the Independent Living Stipend, and
- 2) The Independent Living Stipend Eligibility Grid that provides guidance on eligible youth.

B) Income Exclusions

For the purpose of determining income eligibility for stipend(s), income received by or on behalf of a youth's own child must not be considered part of his or her income. Presumed eligibility for public assistance (e.g., TANF, SSI) which is not being received must not render a youth ineligible to receive stipend(s) under this policy.

C) Stipends Encouraged as Preferred Alternative to Other Public Assistance

Because stipends under this policy are only available until a young adult turns 21, and because other public assistance programs (e.g., TANF) are subject to lifetime time limitations, Workers generally encourage eligible youth to utilize stipend(s) as an alternative to those other programs.

D) Maximum Financial Assistance

The maximum financial assistance allowed is \$240 monthly for food; \$100 for incidentals (inclusive of personal care, additional school supplies and household items) and \$600 monthly for rent.

Under special circumstances, stipend(s) may be approved at a higher rate with approval from the Local Office Manager and Area Director.

E) Eligibility Determination and Determination of Stipend Amount

A youth's receipt of stipend(s) and the amount of those stipend(s) must be approved by the Local Office Manager based on all of the following forms submitted by the assigned Worker.

- Special Approval Request CP&P [Form 16-76](#),
- Transitional Plan for YOUth Success CP&P [Form 5-43](#),

- Independent Living Stipend Budget Worksheet CP&P [Form 10-11](#), and
- Independent Living Stipend Responsibility Agreement CP&P [Form 10-7](#).

The amount of the stipend(s) must be based on the Independent Living Stipend Budget Worksheet, CP&P [Form 10-11](#), developed by the youth and the assigned Worker which reflects the youth's verified income, as well as, rent, food, and incidental expenses.

The youth is required to produce proof of income and expenses as agreed upon and outlined in the Independent Living Stipend Responsibility Agreement CP&P [Form 10-7](#).

F) Opportunity for Building Savings

Youth receiving the independent living stipend are eligible to build a modest savings in preparation for interdependence. This policy allows for a youth to designate up to ten percent (10%) of his or her monthly income to a savings account plan owned and operated in the youth's name. The budget to determine the IL stipend is then based on the monthly income less 10% for savings.

G) Review of Eligibility and Stipend Amount

The assigned Worker, and youth, will re-evaluate the need for the stipend(s) every six months upon the completion of the Transitional Plan YOUth Success, CP&P [Form 5-43](#). Prior to the scheduled update of the transitional plan and in collaboration with the youth, the assigned Worker will adjust the stipend(s) if the Worker learns during the MVR or any other communication with the youth that his or her eligibility or need no longer aligns to the current amounts.

H) Detained or Incarcerated Youth

While CP&P may remain open and provide services to a youth that is detained in a correctional setting, or is in custody via a secure-care setting, the youth is ineligible to receive financial support via the IL stipend(s). Please see LOBA policy [CP&P-IX-F-1-300](#) for information on how to effectuate payment in these situations.

I) Suspension or Termination of Stipend

A youth's receipt of stipend(s) may be suspended or terminated at any time based on compelling evidence that the youth is not upholding responsibilities as outlined in the Independent Living Stipend Responsibility Agreement (ILSRA), CP&P [Form 10-7](#).

With the exception of #6 and #8 of the ILSRA, Workers need to troubleshoot solutions with youth regarding other ILSRA responsibilities and expectations that are not being fulfilled prior to suspending or terminating the stipend.

Suspensions or terminations must be requested by the assigned Worker and approved by the LOM. The assigned Worker is responsible for notifying the youth prior to, and after, the termination or suspension of stipend(s) has occurred. When appropriate, assigned Workers must make efforts to provide notice of termination or suspension far enough in advance to allow the youth to secure other funding or support.

J) Security Deposits

When no alternatives are available, CP&P may pay a required security deposit on behalf of a stipend recipient with the approval of the Local Office Manager.

K) Wraparound Funds

Wraparound (formerly known as Chafee) Funds are not used to pay stipends.

L) No Entitlement to Stipends

Stipend(s) are not an entitlement and are provided at the exclusive discretion of the Department of Children and Families. The Department retains the right to modify eligibility, discontinue services, or modify stipend amounts at any time. Stipends are subject to the availability of funds. Assigned Workers should communicate the denial of any stipend to the youth within five business days; the best practice is to do so in person.

Procedures:

1) Instructions for initiating the Stipend(s)

The assigned Worker completes a Special Approval Request (SAR), CP&P [Form 16-76](#) in NJ Spirit for stipend(s) for up to six months. SARs are accompanied by a completed Independent Living Stipend Budget Worksheet CP&P [Form 10-11](#), an IL Stipend Responsibility Agreement CP&P [Form 10-7](#) and a Transitional Plan for YOUth Success CP&P [Form 5-43](#). The SAR clearly specifies what amount is being allocated to each of the stipends received by the youth.

After completing the SAR, the youth is established as a resource in NJ SPIRIT. Once the youth is established as a resource, the Worker attaches the appropriate independent living stipend service(s) to the youths NJ SPIRIT Resource ID and creates a support service line for each stipend for which he or she is eligible. This action needs to be completed for each of the IL stipends the youth receives (rent, food, incidentals) as well as for the monthly clothing allowance.

Note: It is essential that the youth's address within the resource window is up to date and accurate. The address in the resource window is where all mailings are sent regarding the IL stipend.

2) Requesting & Issuing Rent, Food, and/or Incidentals Stipends

The assigned Worker submits monthly payment requests in the independent living payment request window in NJ SPIRIT for each stipend a youth is approved to receive. Requests are made each month by the third Friday. One deposit for the total amount of all of the stipends goes directly into a youth's linked bank account or onto his or her Q Card by the beginning of the following month.

3) Clothing

Clothing is requested and issued in the same manner as the other stipend(s) (rent, food, and incidentals) for those youth who receive the IL stipend. Clothing allowance for youth in independent living situations is a fixed dollar amount per month, \$85 for regular size clothing or \$95 for oversized clothing.

For those youth that receive IL stipend(s) (rent, food, and incidentals), the clothing amount is directly deposited onto his or her Q Card or into his or her bank account in the same manner as the other stipends. For those not receiving other stipends, CP&P may issue a monthly clothing allowance from the LO Bank Account (LOBA).

[CP&P-IX-F-1-300](#)

Checks for special clothing needs may be authorized in accordance with general agency policy. See [CP&P-IX-F-1-300](#).

4) Issuing Rent Checks Directly to Landlords

A landlord that requires a rent check to be issued directly to him or her submits a written request to the Local Office Manager who then approves the direct payment. The landlord is created as a resource in NJS in order to produce a check. The landlord is required to provide a receipt to the assigned Worker for every direct payment made. LOBA continues to be used to issue rent checks made payable directly to Landlords.

5) Paying Security Deposits

Before a security deposit is paid on behalf of a youth receiving a stipend(s), the assigned Worker makes and documents appropriate efforts to have the deposit waived by the landlord. LOBA or Flex Funds may be used to pay a security deposit.

Payment of security deposits are permitted if the associated rent is consistent with the approved budget. The assigned Worker submits a request for payment of security deposits using Special Approval Request Form, CP&P [Form 16-76](#) which

is subject to LOM approval. The responsible Worker also uses the Security Deposit Agreement, CP&P [Form 16-35](#), which requires the landlord's signature.

The landlord is required to pay interest on any security deposit and upon termination of the youths tenancy, the security deposit is to be returned directly to the Local CP&P Office.

6) Budgeting

At least every six months, the assigned Worker and the youth discuss and evaluate the rent, food, and incidental expenses to develop a budget. The budget is documented on CP&P [Form 10-11](#) and then approved by the LOM as a condition of the youth continuing to receive the stipend(s).

The assigned Worker assists the youth to appropriately plan his or her spending, and provide advice on prudent spending habits. To the extent possible, Workers encourage youth to allocate his or her own income to monthly expenses which are not able to be covered by the stipend(s). When developing the budget with the youth, the assigned Worker is mindful of any functional limitations the youth may have and help plan expenses accordingly.

Budgeting for rent includes any associated costs for basic utilities (electric, heating, water). Budgeting for non-essential utilities (cable television, internet, and telephone) is included in the incidental expenses budget.

When developing the budget, with the youth, the Worker discusses and agrees to any verification of stated income and expenses that are required in order to develop the budget or to maintain continued receipt of the stipend. The youth is expected to discuss income and expenses with his or her Worker and have a signed IL Stipend Responsibility Agreement, CP&P [Form 10-7](#).

Key Terms (Definitions):

- **Youth** - for the purposes of Independent Living Stipend policy, "youth" means a person between the ages of 16 up to 21.
- **Adolescent** - for the purposes of Independent Living Stipend policy, "adolescent" means a person who is age 16 and 17.
- **Young Adult** - for the purposes of Independent Living Stipend Policy, "young adult" means a person who is between the ages of 18 up to 21.
- **Rent** - the cost of occupying a legal dwelling for a period of one month or longer, inclusive of rent and the cost of basic utilities.
- **Incidental Expenses** - expenses for personal care and household items other than rent, food, clothing, or luggage.

- **Independent Living Placement** - a specialized living arrangement for those adolescents, age 16 and 17 (up to their 18th birthday), who are able to function responsibly without continuous adult supervision, or with minimal supervision. An Independent Living placement may be provided in a private home, apartment, or other similar residence.
- **Independent Living Arrangement** - is a living arrangement for those young adults, ages 18 up to 21, who are able to function responsibly without continuous adult supervision, or with minimal supervision. An Independent Living arrangement may be provided in a private home, apartment, or other similar residence.

Forms and Attachments:

- CP&P Form [16-76](#), Special Approval Request
- CP&P [Form 16-34](#), Check Receipt
- CP&P [Form 16-35](#), Security Deposit Agreement
- CP&P [Form 10-11](#), Independent Living Stipend Budget Worksheet
- CP&P [Form 5-43](#), Transitional Plan for YOUth Success
- CP&P [Form 10-7](#), Independent Living Stipend Responsibility Agreement
- CP&P [Form 10-10](#), Voluntary Services Agreement
- [Housing Programs Independent Living Stipend Eligibility](#)
- [IL Stipend Eligibility Grid](#)

Related Information:

- [CP&P-IX-F-1-300](#), Local Office Bank Account (LOBA)

Websites

- NJ Youth Resource Spot, which lists resources for adolescents and young adults: <http://njyrs.org>