

	<b>INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY</b>	
	<b>Chapter 16:</b> Financial Services/Assistance	<b>Effective Date:</b> November 1, 2016
	<b>Section 3:</b> Assistance for a Family's Basic Needs	<b>Version:</b> 3

**STATEMENTS OF PURPOSE**

*This policy is for a child's family of origin. For foster families see policy [16.1 Clothing Personal Items and Permitted Per Diem Expenses](#). For unlicensed relative placements see policy [16.2 Assistance for Unlicensed Relative Placements](#).*

The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) believes families should be financially responsible for ensuring their children's basic needs are met. In situations where a parent, guardian, or custodian needs assistance providing for the basic needs of their children, DCS has determined that the following assistance is available for applicable children (see [Practice Guidance](#)):

1. One (1) month of rent and one (1) security deposit of up to \$750. These each have a cap of \$750 per family, per lifetime of the case. See [Practice Guidance](#) for further details;
2. Collective one-time payment for gas, electric, water, and sewage utilities of up to \$1000 per family;

**Note:** For families in need of mortgage assistance, an additional \$750 may be made available for utility assistance in certain circumstances. See [Practice Guidance](#) for further details.

3. Up to \$1200 per lifetime of the case, per family for Pest Control services;
4. Up to \$400 per lifetime of the case, per child for children's bed and bedding; and
5. Up to \$70 per month, per family to cover the cost of parent, guardian, or custodian travel (e.g., gas card or bus tickets). See [Practice Guidance](#) for further details.

Questions regarding a family's use of assistance payments should be directed to the Regional Manager (RM) and the local Regional Finance Manager (RFM). Additional funding for clothing and personal items may be requested to assist a family in meeting basic needs.

**Note:** The DCS Local Office Director (LOD) or Division Manager (DM) may approve \$500 extra for rent and utilities and \$300 extra for miscellaneous expenses. In addition, there are no restrictions on buying clothing for a child in his or her own home when emergencies arise, with the approval of the LOD. All other requests for funding must be approved by the RM.

DCS will not pay for the following items, except through an RM appeal:

1. Mortgage payment assistance. See [Practice Guidance](#) for further details;
2. Repairs and purchases of home appliances (e.g., stove, refrigerator, and dishwasher) or heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC);
3. Furniture (not including children's bed and bedding as outlined above);
4. Food and groceries;

5. Car repairs, driver's license reinstatement fees, and other expenses related to parental travel not listed above;
6. Recreational activities (including, but not limited to fees, supplies, and uniforms);
7. Education (including, but not limited to tuition, uniforms, and book fees);
8. Day Care; and
9. Telephone and cell phone.

**Note:** An appeal for additional funding may be submitted for non-funded items, if there is an unusual circumstance or a situation that requires additional financial support.

#### Code References

N/A

### **PROCEDURE**

The Family Case Manager (FCM) will:

1. Engage the Child and Family Team (CFT) to identify community supports and services, which may assist the family to meet financial needs;
2. Document whether the family has an unusual circumstance or a situation that requires additional financial support, the exact reason the service is needed, and efforts to locate alternative funding in the case management system. See [Practice Guidance](#) for additional information on alternative funding;
3. Obtain a copy of the signed lease if DCS will pay rent and/or a security deposit for a family; and

**Note:** The [Rental Agreement](#) may be used in place of the lease when a signed lease is not available. Ensure signatures are obtained on the [Security Deposit Agreement](#) (in addition to obtaining a copy of the signed lease) if DCS will pay a security deposit. See [Practice Guidance](#) for additional information.

4. Complete a referral to request approved funding for the family if community resources are not able to meet the identified needs.

If the LOD or DM Request for Additional Funding is needed:

1. The FCM will complete the [Request for Additional Funding \(SF54870\)](#) detailing unusual circumstances and situations prior to the expenditure of any additional funds and submit to the FCM Supervisor for approval or denial;
2. The FCM Supervisor will review and approve or deny the [Request for Additional Funding \(SF54870\)](#);
3. The FCM Supervisor will immediately notify the FCM if the request is denied. If the Supervisor approves the [Request for Additional Funding \(SF54870\)](#), it will be submitted to the LOD or DM for final approval or denial;
4. The LOD or DM will approve or deny the [Request for Additional Funding \(SF54870\)](#) up to a set limit. If the LOD or DM approves the [Request for Additional Funding \(SF54870\)](#), a copy of the appeal will be submitted to the RFM; and
5. The LOD or DM will notify the RM and the FCM Supervisor of the final determination via written correspondence.

**Note:** The LOD or DM may approve \$300 extra for clothing and other personal items, \$500 extra for rent and utilities, and \$300 extra for miscellaneous expenses. In addition,

there are no restrictions on buying clothing for children in their own homes when emergencies arise, with the approval of the LOD or DM. **An RM appeal, utilizing the [Request for Additional Funding \(SF54870\)](#) form, must be submitted for approval by the RM when additional funds or funds outside the scope of LOD or DM approval are needed.**

If an RM Appeal is needed:

1. The FCM will complete the RM appeal on the [Request for Additional Funding \(SF54870\)](#) form, detailing unusual circumstances and situations prior to the expenditure of any funds and submit to the FCM Supervisor for approval or denial;
2. The FCM Supervisor will review and approve or deny the [Request for Additional Funding \(SF54870\)](#) (RM appeal);
3. The FCM Supervisor will submit all approved **and** denied [Request for Additional Funding \(SF54870\)](#) forms to the LOD or DM for approval or denial;
4. The LOD or DM will approve or deny the [Request for Additional Funding \(SF54870\)](#) (RM appeal);
5. The LOD or DM will send all approved **and** denied [Request for Additional Funding \(SF54870\)](#) forms to the RM for final approval or denial;
6. The RM will submit a copy to the RFM, if approved; and
7. The RM will notify the LOD or DM of the final determination via written correspondence.

## **PRACTICE GUIDANCE**

### **Rent and Security Deposit**

A copy of the lease is required when DCS pays rent and/or a security deposit for a family. The [Rental Agreement](#) may serve as a replacement of the lease when no lease is available (e.g., an informal living arrangement between family and/or friends).

The [Security Deposit Agreement](#) is required when DCS pays a security deposit for a family. This is an agreement between the landlord and DCS in which the landlord agrees that any refundable portion of the security deposit will be paid back to DCS when the tenant leaves.

Refer to the following scenarios for guidance:

- **DCS will be paying rent and a security deposit:** A copy of the lease (or the [Rental Agreement](#)) **and** the [Security Deposit Agreement](#) are needed.
- **DCS will be paying rent only:** A copy of the lease (or the [Rental Agreement](#)) is needed.
- **DCS will be paying a security deposit only:** A copy of the lease (or the [Rental Agreement](#)) **and** the [Security Deposit Agreement](#) are needed.

### **Prior to Requesting Funding**

Prior to requesting funding from the DCS local office to assist a family in meeting basic needs, the FCM should ensure financial support from extended family members is explored for potential funding assistance as well as the following:

#### **Utilities:**

1. Contact the Trustee's Office;
2. Contact the utility company (e.g., gas, electric, and water) directly to see about enrolling in a payment plan;
3. Contact local winter assistance and/or summer cooling programs if available in the area;
4. Contact the Energy Assistance Program (EAP);

5. Contact the Salvation Army; and
6. Contact local churches.

**Transportation:**

1. Contact the Salvation Army;
2. Contact the school system;
3. Contact Medicaid Transportation; and
4. Contact churches and community groups that may provide transportation to and from certain types of appointments.

The DCS local office should have a mechanism in place to validate the family's participation in the service or event for which the assistance was deemed necessary prior to subsequent disbursements to the family.

**Travel Expenses**

Permitted travel expenses are those related to the benefit of the parent (e.g., parental visitation, counseling/therapy sessions, doctor's visits, education, and substance abuse appointments/meetings).

**Mortgage Assistance**

In the event a family needs assistance to pay their mortgage, DCS should provide assistance for other household expenses to be paid so funds are available for the family to make the mortgage payment. The FCM and family will develop a plan as to how household expenses will be paid in future months. This assistance is available one (1) time for each family and is available through an approved appeal by the RM.

**Applicable Children/Families**

Applicable children/families include families who have a child who:

1. Is an out-of-home Child in Need of Services (CHINS);
2. Is an in-home CHINS;
3. Is the subject of an Informal Adjustment (IA); or
4. Is the subject of an assessment and receiving services.

<b>FORMS AND TOOLS</b>
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1. [Request for Additional Funding \(SF54870\)](#)
2. [Rental Agreement](#)
3. [Security Deposit Agreement](#)

<b>RELATED INFORMATION</b>
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N/A