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Developmental Disability Services Family Support Funds

PURPOSE:

Each year, funds are available to support families caring for family members with intellectual disabilities or autism. Family Support Funds provide flexible, financial support for a wide variety of goods and services that may be needed to allow individuals with intellectual disabilities or autism to remain in a home with other family members. Categories of covered goods and services include respite, clothing, furniture/appliances, personal hygiene products, medical items/services and medication, and assistance with the household's heating and utility costs. Other items may be covered if there is a demonstrated need for the goods or services.

FUNDING LIMITS:

1. The amount available for Family Support Funds for the State Fiscal Year (July 1 - June 30) is budgeted by the Office of Aging and Disability Services (OADS).
2. For each State Fiscal Year, there is a cap of \$1,000 for each family having one eligible individual with intellectual disabilities or autism, and a higher cap of \$1,500 for each family having two or more individuals with intellectual disabilities or autism.
3. Funds are generally provided on a first-come-first-served, are subject to OADS approval based upon this protocol, and can only be provided when funds are available.

PROGRAM GUIDANCE:

1. The family member who requests Family Support Funds – parent, spouse, sibling, or otherwise – must reside in the same home as the family member with intellectual disability or autism.
2. Family Support Funds may be used to purchase goods and services that are needed to support the family caregiving relationship.
3. Family Support Funds should be considered funds of last resort, in order to provide these funds to as many families as possible, and to be available for as long as possible into the State Fiscal Year. Other sources of funding must be explored prior to using Family Support Funds to purchase covered goods and services. Efforts to identify other funding must be documented in the electronic case management record by the Case Manager.
4. Family members caring for individuals in their home who are receiving Section 21 Shared Living services or Section 29 Shared Living services are not eligible for Family Support Funds.
5. Family Support Funds may not be used for summer camp or vacation purposes.
6. The identified need for the goods or services must be documented on the Person Centered Plan for the individual with an intellectual disability or autism.
7. The Person-Centered Planning process includes reviewing receipt of Family Support Funds and ensuring that the funds are used for the intended purposes. This should be done as part of a review of needs/unmet needs.

8. Family Support Funds are issued directly to the family member requesting the funds; the State of Maine will not issue an IRS 1099 Form for Family Support Funds.

PROTOCOL FOR ACCESSING FUNDS:

1. The assigned Case Manager of the individual with intellectual disability or autism shall submit a request for Family Support Funds to OADS.familysupport@maine.gov, where it will be received by the Developmental Services Operations Manager at the OADS Central Office. The request must include:
 - a. A completed Family Support Assessment form from the electronic case management system signed by the family member requesting Family Support Funds and the Case Manager. By signing the form, families are attesting that they are providing support to an individual with intellectual disability or autism and that the funds will be used for the intended purpose(s);
 - b. A copy of an estimate or bill for the requested goods or services (requests for multiple goods or services must be itemized); and
 - c. If respite funds are requested, proof of an unanswered vendor call. (i.e. documentation of a vendor call with note stating “no response or non-availability”).
2. The Developmental Services Operations Manager shall review each request for Family Support Funds and determine whether to approve or deny the request.
 - a. In evaluating the request, the Developmental Services Operations Manager will:
 - i. Ensure that documentation in the electronic case management record indicates the family member requesting the funds and the requested goods or services meet program requirements; and
 - ii. Reach out for additional or clarifying information when necessary.
 - b. All decisions regarding requests will be made in writing and documented in the electronic case management system: Family Support Assessment form’s description box.
 - c. If the request is denied, the documentation will state the reason(s) for the denial.
 - d. If the request is approved, an email stating the approval will also be sent to the CCM or other requesting individual requesting funds.
 - e. OADS shall endeavor to complete each request for Family Support Funds (from request submission to payment) within four to six weeks.

PROTOCOL AFTER RECEIVING FUNDS:

If a family member is approved for Family Support Funds, the Case Manager shall review the following reporting requirements with the family member:

1. There are reporting requirements for these funds if you receive any public benefit/s.
2. Family Support funds must report within ten (10) days of receipt of the funds to each public benefit.
3. If you receive social security benefits or are a Medicare buy-in beneficiary, you must report this funding to the Social Security Administration (S.S.A.) who will then determine if this is considered income or a social service based on <https://secure.ssa.gov/poms.nsf/lnx/0500815050>.