

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

### **What are concrete goods and services?**

Concrete goods and services address a family's immediate need for things such as support for food, housing, clothing, transportation, etc. These are things that support a family in gaining access to necessities that are identified as critical needs, in conjunction with the SSW's assessment.

### **Why should we use concrete goods and services?**

Research shows an association between income level and child maltreatment rates, which indicates that families living in poverty are more likely to be involved with the child welfare system. Families living in poverty may struggle to engage in and complete professional services due to the challenges of meeting their basic needs as well as the associated stressors. It is anticipated that providing families with access to these funds will reduce barriers to successful parenting and reduce the risk of the family becoming further involved in the child welfare system at present or in the future. Providing relief for an immediate need may further facilitate engagement in professional services and increase family stability by reducing stressors.

### **What types of goods and services are eligible for this assistance?**

- Housing assistance such as security deposits, rental payments, utility deposits, utility bills, insurance, phone bills, internet and/or devices, and emergency housing funds;
- Environmental needs such as pest control/extermination, transportation, and weatherization;
- Medical and mental health needs to include medication costs, transportation to appointments, etc.; and
- Housing supplies may include necessary household goods such as beds, bedding, kitchen appliances, cleaning supplies, groceries, clothing, etc.

### **What is considered a needed concrete good or service?**

Through this funding, concrete goods and services are items or services that are immediate and address a critical need. Some things that may be approved are assistance with vehicle repair, rent/mortgage assistance, pest control, or household appliances. Some things that may not be approved include payment of utilities for several months or assistance for non-critical, non-imminent goods.

## **REFERRAL RELATED QUESTIONS**

### **How do I make a referral?**

The child protective service (CPS) worker is required to complete the Community Action Council Referral for Concrete Goods and Services and provide supportive documentation. Once approved by their supervisor, the document should be emailed to their gatekeeper with the subject line "Case Name – CPS Referral" (ex: Jon Smith – CPS Referral).

Once the referral is approved by the regional gatekeeper, the referral will be sent to the Child Protection Branch ([DCBSChildProtection@ky.gov](mailto:DCBSChildProtection@ky.gov)) for final review/approval.

Once the Child Protection Branch reviews and approves the referral, it will be sent to the CAC for payment processing. The SSW should **NOT** contact their local CAC to request funds.

**What if my referral is urgent?**

If there is an urgent referral, please note it in the subject line of the email and on the referral. An urgent referral would be one where the children are likely to enter out-of-home care (OOHC) or be removed if unpaid, etc. Please do not list referrals as urgent, if the imminency is not justified on the referral.

The subject line should read “URGENT: Case Name – CPS Referral” (URGENT: Jon Smith – CPS Referral).

**What should be included in the referral?**

All referrals should provide enough detail to demonstrate the amount requested and the reason for each request. There should be thorough information related to how the request will benefit the family and what other resources have been sought prior to the referral. It is mandatory to exhaust local and community resources before making the referral. Justification for the referral should be explained on the referral.

Explanation for sustainability is required. Each field on the referral should be completed thoroughly. Any referral that is not completed thoroughly and signed by a supervisor and gatekeeper will be returned for updates and signatures. Information should include the delivery/shipping/pick up address if the request requires delivery or pick up of the goods. Providing this information will cut down on the emails requesting additional information.

**What is the limit that can be requested?**

The limit that can be requested is up to four thousand dollars (\$4,000) per household.

**Can I make a request for over \$4,000?**

Currently, the limit is four thousand dollars (\$4,000) per household.

**How many referrals can be made for a family?**

A family may receive up to four thousand dollars (\$4,000) per household/per calendar year and no more than two (2) referrals per calendar year.

**How are these funds dispersed?**

The CAC will pay the vendor directly. Referrals that do not list a vendor will not be approved for payment. There are times when the CAC may need to follow up with the vendor specifically for documentation. If this is the case, there may be a slight delay in the process. It is important when listing a vendor to ensure that correct contact information is captured to expedite this process.

**Who approves the referral?**

At this time, the referral will go through a few levels of review and approval. Initially, a supervisor will review and approve each referral before sending it to the regional gatekeeper. Each regional gatekeeper will review and approve the referral before sending it to the Child Protection Branch for final review and approval. Each referral should provide details and include supportive documentation.

**Can I close my case if my referral for funding is pending payment to the vendor?**

This is highly dependent on the case situation. It may be appropriate to close a case while waiting for payment to be issued if there is a backlog of referrals that the CAC is working to complete. However, in cases where the pending funding is to alleviate a safety threat, it may be appropriate to keep the case open to monitor safety while waiting for payment to be issued. This is especially true if there may be issues where the CAC cannot process payment to the vendor, etc.

**How can I check on the status of my submitted referral?**

The Child Protection Branch will include the SSW in the email to the CAC when a referral has been approved for payment. Please allow two (2) weeks before inquiring about the status of a referral.

**I sent my referral but haven't heard anything, should I send it again?**

No, a referral should only be sent one (1) time to the specified email address. Sending the referral more than once causes further delays as each referral must be compared to ensure nothing has changed or been altered.

**What is the process for the CAC to complete a referral and issue payment to a vendor?**

When the CAC receives a referral, they will:

1. Review the referral for the supervisor's signature and vendor information;
2. Ensure they have received backup documentation with the referral (a bill, invoice, online cart, lease/rental agreement, etc.) and that the name on the documentation matches the names on the referral. If the names differ, CAC will follow up with the SSW for clarification;
3. Reach out to the vendor directly to request a W-9 form to ensure the vendor is in good standing with the state and that the mailing address is correct; and
4. Submit the request for payment to their fiscal department and within their Castinet system once the W-9 form is received. Payment is generally issued within one (1) week.

**What documentation is needed to support my requested referral?**

Documentation to support the request includes:

1. A bill or invoice that shows:
  - a. The account number;
  - b. The amount due;
  - c. The name of the account holder; and
  - d. The name of the vendor to be paid.
2. An online cart to show what items are to be ordered/requested;
3. A lease or rental agreement, if requesting that rent be paid; and
4. A W-9 form from the vendor.
  - a. Special notes regarding W-9 forms:
    - i. A W-9 form should have the vendor's contact information so that the CAC has the correct address/correct vendor for payment. If the vendor is noted to be in poor standing with the state, funds are unavailable for that vendor.
    - ii. If an SSW is in contact with the vendor, they can request this document to supply the referral and documentation to the CAC. The CAC can and will request the W-9 form, but this will delay payment if the vendor is not responsive or the contact information for the vendor is incorrect.

**Important note:** If the bill is in an individual's name who is not listed on the referral, please specify in the referral why this is the case. If the information is not specific, there will be a delay in processing.

**How many times will the CAC or Child Protection Branch reach out to me about missing information or documentation?**

If the SSW does not supply the needed documentation with the referral, the Child Protection Branch or CAC will reach out one (1) time to request the needed documents. Failure to provide these documents within fifteen (15) calendar days will result in the referral being closed and unpaid. This does not include the W-9 form documentation.

**Can I tell every family I work with that they have \$4,000 to spend and ask them how they want to spend it?**

No, every family does not qualify for this program and not every family will require the entire amount. This funding is meant to help families who need a service or good that will ensure the home is safe and to support their ability to maintain their children in the home while providing for their basic needs. This funding is not promised, and the SSW should carefully mention its availability when talking with families.

**SPECIFIC GOODS AND SERVICES QUESTIONS**

**Will the CAC pay for utilities in someone's name who is not a household member?**

There are times when utilities may not be in a household member's name. This can be due to the inability to get approval from the utility company, poor credit score, or poor history with the company. If an invoice is not in the client's name, it is important to ensure that the referral defines this and provides an explanation. Lack of elaboration on this may result in a delay in processing for the CAC, as it will require follow-up with the SSW.

**How do I submit a referral for clothes, groceries, cleaning supplies, etc.?**

A referral for these goods should include an online cart from a budget-friendly retailer with any items that are being requested. This will allow the CAC to review the referral, go to the retailer, and then order the items listed in the cart. This can be set to delivery or pick up for the client, depending on the retailer and availability.

**What type of vendor can I list for cleaning supplies, clothing, household supplies, appliances, etc.?**

A request can be made to any retailer that is convenient for the family. Some common retailers include, but are not limited to Lowes, Walmart, Home Depot, Amazon, Kroger, American Freight, and Target.

**Can I request gas cards?**

Yes, requests for gas cards are appropriate. The process will be expedited if the names of local gas stations are noted on the referral. This will make it possible to quickly purchase the card and mail it.

**Can I request payment for services such as drug screens, parenting classes, or other court-ordered services?**

No, these funds are for family-identified needs for goods and services that are critical to meeting basic needs. Court-ordered services, drug screens, and parenting classes would not be an appropriate use of this funding.

**Do I need to make a budget with the family for future expenses?**

Families must have a plan for meeting their future financial needs. Example: It is not appropriate to provide a car down payment for a family who cannot afford the monthly car payment and will, therefore, have the car repossessed. A question on the referral references an informal budget and the plans that the family has to meet their own basic needs and sustainability. This is a required part of the referral. Without the ability to demonstrate sustainability, the referral will not be approved. Additionally, this may lead to some insight into other services or available supports that may help the family such as daycare assistance and/or application for family support such as WIC, insurance, etc. Engaging the family and providing information for additional support is always an expectation and helps to identify other barriers/needs the family may have.

**Can I make a referral for groceries?**

Absolutely! Food is a basic need for a family and there are instances where they may not be able to get assistance in the community. It is important for the SSW to explore options for future needs with the family, and to discuss ways to ensure they can access groceries in the future.

**I am requesting monthly expenses to be paid short-term while the family gets back on their feet; will this be approved?**

Referrals for monthly expenses will be approved for one (1) month at a time. This funding is not equipped to handle monthly expenses on an ongoing basis for a family. Payment for a single month will allow the SSW time to work with the family to access further assistance or plan for future expenses. If an additional referral is needed, it may be submitted; however, it will require adequate justification for the need, and the total of the two (2) referrals together may not exceed four thousand dollars (\$4,000).

**Can I request this fund for a case I just closed?**

No, these funds are only available to families who are active with the agency.

**Can I request this fund for Safety Net clients or foster parents?**

No, there are other funds available to safety net clients, and foster parents are paid a per diem.

**What if the parents are separated, but each household needs something? Can both households receive \$4,000?**

If the parents share joint custody of the child(ren), they can both receive up to four thousand dollars (\$4,000) with proper documentation and justification on the referral.

**Can I request this fund to help a client pay for child support?**

No, child support is not an approved good/service.

**Can I request this fund to help a client pay for legal fees and fines?**

No, legal fees and fines are not approved goods/services.

**Can I request name-brand items such as Nike, Abercrombie, Victoria's Secret, and Old Navy? And/or can I request items such as a PlayStation, X-box, new computer gaming system, tablet, etc.?**

This funding is meant to assist families with critical, immediate needs to support safety within the home. Most often, these types of requests will be denied. This is not an unlimited budget, and care should be taken to ensure funding is available to assist families who need things such as paid utilities, car repair, or the purchase of groceries. If you feel this request is justified, detailed information should be provided on the referral.

**Can I make a referral for a gift card?**

No, the family should select the items they wish to have purchased and the SSW should then send the cart or order summary to the CAC along with the referral. Gift cards are not an approved use of these funds.

**How long will this funding be available?**

The funding can end at any time. If this occurs, all referrals will be put on hold and no new referrals will be accepted until additional money is added to the budget. It is imperative that these funds only be requested for emergent, imminent situations and all community resources should be explored first. It is important to communicate that submission of a referral does not mean approval of payment. Please remain mindful of this when speaking with families or providers and do not promise that funding will be issued.