

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES
SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
311 WEST SARATOGA STREET
BALTIMORE, MARYLAND 21201

DATE: October 1, 2009

CIRCULAR LETTER # SSA # 09-22

TO: Directors, Local Departments of Social Services
Assistant Directors, Local Departments of Social Services
Foster Care Supervisors, Local Departments of Social Services,

FROM: Carnitra D. White 
Executive Director
Social Services Administration

RE: Semi-Independent Living Arrangement Subsidy Payments

PROGRAMS AFFECTED: Out-of-Home Placement Services/Foster Care/Kinship
Care/Adoption

ORIGINATING OFFICE: Children and Family Services

BACKGROUND: Supplements Policy Directive

ACTION REQUIRED OF: All Local Departments

REQUIRED ACTION: Implement payment changes

ACTION DUE DATE: Retro-active to July 1, 2009

CONTACT PERSON: Deborah Ramelmeier, Director
Office of Children and Family Services
Social Services Administration
410-767-7506

Purpose

The purpose of the Policy Directive is to raise the payment amount for youth receiving subsidies through a Semi-Independent Living Arrangement to a maximum amount that is equivalent to the foster care maintenance payment.

Background

COMAR 07.02.10.10 describes the purpose of the Semi-Independent Living Arrangement (SILA) to be to "...provide youth an opportunity to learn and practice independent living skills and activities for a specified time period as indicated in the service plan while receiving services from the local department and provider agency." In short, the SILA provides responsible youth who are committed to the local department the opportunity to put into practice life skills for their care by allowing the option of an independent or self-sustained living arrangement for the youth, with local department supervision and services.

Youth Eligibility

Eligible youth may request a SILA through their local department caseworker, or the caseworker may consider a SILA as an appropriate living arrangement for the youth. A youth may be eligible to participate in a semi-independent living arrangement if the youth meets the following requirements:

- Is 16 through 20 years old;
- Is continually enrolled in and regularly attending school or vocational training; or is working at least 80 hours per month.
- Agrees to the requirements of the service agreement;
- Needs help in transitioning to self-sufficiency; and
- Is capable of contributing to the cost of the semi-independent living arrangement through:
 - Earned income from employment; or
 - Unearned income such as scholarships, stipends, grants, work-study arrangements, Social Security (supplemental security income or survivor's benefits), or any combination.

Youth may also be eligible for SILA if the youth has a documented disability and the youth's case plan documents how the youth's disability can be accommodated in the Independent Living Preparation Program.

Goods and services eligible for SILA subsidy include:

- Food
- Transportation
- Clothing
- Recreation
- Education
- Housing
- And other approved needs for the care of the youth

Eligible Residence Locations

A SILA location is an apartment, house, boarder arrangement, college housing, or other living arrangements for the youth that is approved by the local department for the youth. The following do not qualify as SILA locations:

- Rescue mission, nonresidential hotel, motel, or adult shelter;
- Tourist home;
- Residence where a youth is living with an individual in a conjugal relationship; or
- Any arrangement for housing in a transient or emergency-type setting.

Subsidy Payments

Youth eligible for SILA subsidy may receive a monthly payment amount up to 100% of the regular foster care maintenance payment for children age 12 and over. In order to receive the payments, the youth shall:

- Maintain compliance with the terms of the service agreement for SILA.

If the youth has a representative payee, payments may be made to the representative payee. Otherwise the payments shall be paid directly to the youth, unless the youth has demonstrated an inability to manage money. If the youth has demonstrated an inability to manage money, the local department may require that a representative payee be appointed before initiating the SILA, and make payments to the representative payee for the youth.

Flex Funds

Youth in receipt of SILA are also eligible for flex funds as youth in out-of-home placement in accordance with COMAR 07.02.11.

MD CHESSIE Documentation

Youth in a SILA remain in the Out-of-Home Placement program assignment, and their place or type of residence is listed in the living arrangement screen. The youth may not be paid the subsidy directly in MD CHESSIE because the youth may not be listed as a vendor or a placement provider. Subsidy payments made to the youth are paid outside of MD CHESSIE and documented on the Service Log as an "agency provided service". SILA subsidy payments to youth are listed as an allowable payment outside of MD CHESSIE. The youth's ability to manage money or identification of the representative payee shall be documented in the Case Plan 4, General tab in the section "Describe youth's compliance in developing and carrying out terms of service".

Staff and clients may not be entered as vendors in MD CHESSIE. Therefore, in order to document in MD CHESSIE a payment made directly to the youth such as an Independent Living (IL) Stipends, the DSS pays youth through FMIS after a MD CHESSIE "Agency Provided Services" Service Log is completed and authorized. The following is the process to complete this task.

- (*County Name*) DSS is entered into MD CHESSIE as a "Vendor of Paid Services" with goods and services added to the vendor record that corresponds to purchases either 1) made by staff out-of-pocket, or 2) an "IL Stipends." ("IL Stipend" needs to be added as a service to MD CHESSIE.)
- Caseworker creates a recurring "Referred Services" Service Log, and monthly creates a Purchase Authorization in MD CHESSIE to pay a monthly Stipend to an IL client. Caseworker clearly enters in the Service Log Justification – "IL Stipend for (*Client Name*)", and includes the client's SSN and full 'remit to' address for FMIS processing. The DSS is selected as the vendor, and the expenditure is charged to an appropriate IL

category code. (IL Room and Board categories need to be added to MD CHESSIE in the Service Log.)

- Purchase Authorizations are routed in MD CHESSIE through the approval process: Supervisory Approval, Funding Approval, and Payment Approval.
- Fiscal receives required paperwork including original receipts and fully approved original and copy of the 312-F form or MD CHESSIE screens print(s) reflecting living arrangement for IL Stipends, and electronically approves payment in MD CHESSIE. Payment interfaces to the local AFS system from which a check is produced payable to the DSS.

Charge Codes

Payments made for SILA shall be paid from the maintenance budget through Service Log using the following codes:

Housing:

- 5117 – for IV-E Eligible Youth ages 16-18 years
- 5118 – for Non IV-E Eligible Youth ages 16-18 years
- 5119 – for Youth ages 18 – 21 years still in State custody. Other related charge codes: Transitioning Youth Goods and Services:
- 5120 for youth 18-21 who are no longer in State custody but were in Foster care on their 18th birthday.