

Bridges SFY 2022 Maintenance Guidance

The Child and Family Health Collaborative recently received guidance from ODJFS regarding the pooling of unspent or excess maintenance funds that requires a change to our current approaches for expending these funds.

1. Agencies can no longer utilize one Participant's maintenance funds to pay for another Participant's needs.
 - a. If additional maintenance funds are needed to support a Participant's needs, agencies shall follow the new Chafee/TANF IL request to PCSA.
 - b. If the Chafee/TANF IL request to PCSA is denied, an Emergency Normalcy Request can be completed and submitted to your Regional Coordinator and Carrie Block of ODJFS for review and approval.
2. Bridges provider agencies shall not use maintenance funds for Participants other than for whom the funds were intended and may not "pool" excess/unspent maintenance funds to use for future expenses. Any additional expenses not budgeted for or covered by the monthly maintenance for a Participant must be paid for by following the new Emergency-Normalcy Fund request noted above.
 - a. When a Participant's financial needs do not exceed the total amount of monthly maintenance generating a maintenance "pool", the provider agencies are required to do the following:
 - I. Return any unspent maintenance to the Collaborative the next month following the end of each quarter (e.g., In April, unspent maintenance from January, February, and March would be returned). Refer to the chart example on page 2.
 - II. Quarterly returns of funds to the Collaborative will occur in the months of October, January, April, and July; each for the previous three months.
 - III. Returning quarterly funds is done via written check to the *Child and Family Health Collaborative of Ohio* noting *Unspent Maintenance* with completed invoice detailing the Participant's SACWIS ID, month, and associated Voucher ID, total amount of pooled maintenance per month, and total amount returned.
 - b. If agencies have unspent maintenance funds for Participants who are terminating from Bridges, those funds must be immediately returned using the aforementioned process.
3. Effective start date is immediately with the issuance of the revised Provider Manual.
4. The Collaborative and ODJFS will work together to determine a strategy to return the funds to the state.

Maintenance Return Example

| PARTICIPANT A | | | | |
|---------------|----------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Month | Maintenance Received | Maintenance Spent | Unspent Maintenance | Maintenance to Return |
| January | \$ 1,288.00 | \$ 920.00 | \$ 368.00 | \$ 368.00 |
| February | \$ 1,288.00 | \$ 1,100.00 | \$ 188.00 | \$ 556.00 |
| March | \$ 1,288.00 | \$ 760.00 | \$ 528.00 | \$ 1,084.00 |

The unspent maintenance for January, February, and March is aggregated and returned in April which is the month following the end this quarter. Any unspent maintenance is “locked in” and must be returned to the Collaborative and not distributed to the participant.

Tips for Expending Maintenance Funds:

The following tips can be applied as guidance for expending Participant maintenance monthly to keep the budget manageable.

- 1) For the Participant’s first month of enrollment, their budgetary needs should not exceed the anticipated pro-rated maintenance amount of the first month.
 - a) In the event the Participant’s budgetary needs exceed the pro-rated maintenance amount, a Chafee/TANF IL request to the local PCSA must be completed; or Emergency Normalcy Request can be submitted for emergent situations or the Chafee/TANF IL request is denied.
- 2) Encourage working Participants to utilize and budget their paychecks and maintenance in meeting their basic needs monthly.
- 3) Ensure basic needs of Participants are being adequately met via the initial and ongoing budgeting process.
- 4) Continually assess the Participant’s financial needs and begin building on what has already been provided.
- 5) As Participants are transitioning out of Bridges:
 - a) Ensure Participants can successfully manage their finances independently.
 - b) Ensure they have the adequate necessities prior to discharge.
- 6) Confirm Participants are receiving their last month’s maintenance budgeted amounts and/or their final month’s bills are being paid for them.
- 7) Maintenance cannot be used to support any future expenses for a Participant leaving the program. If the Participant’s termination date is October 15th, they are eligible for the full amount. Agencies should budget with the participant their October’s monthly expenses (e.g., rent, utilities, transportation, etc.) prior to exiting the program. Agencies cannot pay for future rent or monthly expenses. (e.g., November rent)

Using donations to support Participant needs should be done as a last resort because maintenance funds are provided to cover basic needs such as furniture and housing costs (rent, security deposits). Agencies should be using maintenance funds to support these expenses as much as possible. Doing so will reduce the amount of unspent maintenance and will allow the donations to be used for others in the community.

Checking and Savings Accounts:

Personal incidentals cannot be provided to Participants to use for savings accounts; all allocations for personal incidentals need to be earmarked for a purpose on the budget. Each Participant must establish their own individual checking and/or savings account; savings for Participants cannot be maintained by the agency for disbursements upon exit from Bridges.

Maintenance funds must be used to provide financial support for the Participant's basic needs and to prepare them in living on their own post Bridges. Persistent reassessment of a Participant's needs is key to ensuring adequate disbursement of maintenance.

If maintenance is being allocated based on these strategies, the Participant's needs should be adequately met, and excess maintenance funds should either be non-existent or minimal. To help determine if a particular expense is appropriate, please see the Maintenance Allowable Expense Spreadsheet on the Collaborative Bridges Portal.