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DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES SERVICES

COVID-19 STATE OF EMERGENCY INCREASED FUNDING AND FLEXIBILITY FOR SHARED LIVING PROVIDERS

The safety of individuals and their dedicated Shared Living Providers is paramount. The Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living, Division of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDSD) is making temporary flexibility available to agencies to support shared living providers (SLP) that are supporting individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. This temporary flexibility is granted in order to stabilize and support those homes.

New SLP financial relief - temporary monthly emergency stipend fund

Increased Funding for all Shared Living Providers

The State has approved financial relief to Agencies to support SLP based on counts provided to DAIL as a part of the DA/SSA hazard pay proposal. This is new funding provided by DAIL to support SLP during the COVID-19 State of Emergency. Agencies are expected to ensure that each SLP receive *at least an additional \$500* Difficulty of Care payment per month, per individual served, for 3 months between March and June of 2020. If additional SLP payments were already made, the Agency may recoup those costs up to \$500 per month through this fund source.

Conversion of Unused Respite or Other Services Provided by Workers Hired by SLPs

DDSD is also encouraging agencies to convert unused respite and/or other services provided by workers hired by SLPs into a Difficulty of Care stipend when it is critical to increase financial support of Shared Living Providers beyond the \$500 a month increase noted above.

What criteria should be used to evaluate an increase to the Difficulty of Care stipend?

The agency will assess circumstances on a case by case basis, depending on the level of need of the individual being supported and increased demand on the SLP due to the consistent loss of typically provided hourly or daily services during the healthcare crisis. Criteria for approval includes the following scenarios:

- The SLP cannot have respite providers and/or support workers enter their homes during the state of emergency, or workers are unavailable due to the COVID-19 crisis, or
- There are respite dollars or other unused funds not associated with agency-hired staff in the individual's HCBS budget remaining as of April 1, 2020 through 6/30/20, and
- The SLP needs reimbursement for additional care provided during COVID 19 state of emergency.

What funds for services provided by workers hired by SLPs may be used?

The agency may move unused respite or other services provided by workers hired by SLPs (employment, community, home) into a Difficulty of Care stipend for the SLP when the following are true:

- The funds are within individuals' budgets; and,
- The funds are not associated with agency staff, infrastructure or operations; and,
- The funds are necessary to preserve shared living placements, and to address peoples' health and safety needs as effectively as possible.

How long will this flexibility last?

The agency may move unused respite or other services provided by workers hired by SLPs into the Difficulty of Care stipend through 6/30/20.

Is there a limit to the Difficulty of Care payment increase through the conversion of unused funds?

The maximum allowable increase to Difficulty of Care stipends is \$1,000 per month for 3 months through 6/30/20 through the conversion of unused funds.

What if there are no unused respite or SLP managed funds available in the person's budget?

Agencies are asked to consider use of DDSD One Time Funds if respite and/or other services provided by workers hired by SLPs are not available.

What is the total increase in the Difficulty of Care payments that an SLP can receive?

- The SLP must receive \$500 per month, per individual served, for 3 months under option 1.
- The agency may also choose to convert up to \$1000 per individual served by the SLP through option 2. This determination should be based on individual needs and prior amounts paid.

Fund Source	Amount per month	Total for 3 months
Option 1- NEW SLP funds	\$500 per individual served	\$1500 per individual served
Option 2- Funds Conversion	\$1000 per individual served maximum	\$3000 per individual served maximum
Option 3- One time funds	<i>One-time DOC payment per One-time funds guidance</i>	
TOTAL	\$1500 per individual served	\$4500 per individual served

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What other flexibilities are available to assist SLPs?

Currently there are rules in the *Vermont Medicaid Manual for Developmental Disabilities Services* indicating that the spouse/domestic partner/civil union partner of the home provider cannot be paid to provide respite. It also indicates that spouse/domestic partner/civil union partner of the home provider could be paid for community supports or in-home residential supports at the discretion of the provider agency.

During the state of emergency:

- The spouse/domestic partner/civil union partner of the home provider **can** be paid to provide respite.
- The spouse/domestic partner/civil union partner of the home provider **can** be paid for community supports or in-home residential supports, without seeking approval of the agency.
- All workers must go through the background check process as currently required.