

SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH CENTER

POLICY AND PROCEDURE MANUAL

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Policy 136 – Family Support Services

I. POLICY

In keeping with the goals and philosophy of family empowerment, i.e., families making decisions that affect their own life matters, Southern Highlands coordinates a Family Support Council for Mercer, McDowell, and Wyoming Counties. This Council will allocate funds from the Family Support Services grant to eligible families with developmentally disabled dependents once all other sources of assistance have been utilized or denied.

II. DISCUSSION

The Family Support Council implements the philosophy of community inclusion of the developmentally disabled and provides support for their families. **The Council strives to empower families to determine their own needs and gives support to maintain the family unit in a normalized community environment.** The Council is comprised of developmentally disabled individuals, family members or primary care providers from the three county catchment area of this Center.

III. FAMILY SUPPORT COUNCIL

1. The Family Support Council shall have a membership of nine (9) individuals, the majority of whom are family members or primary caregivers of a developmentally disabled person or are developmentally disabled themselves. The goal of Council membership composition will be that each of the three counties served by the Center is represented and that membership does not fall below seven (7).
2. The Council meets at its discretion at least quarterly.
3. Council members who are primary caregivers, family members or developmentally disabled, shall be reimbursed for travel, lodging and child care expenses while attending Council meetings. The rate for reimbursement will be at the established rate of this Center at the time expenses are incurred.
4. Each year the Council shall elect a parent or caregiver representative to attend the State Family Support Council. Reimbursement for actual expenses for attendance shall be furnished to the representative at established Center rates.

5. Any eligible Council member may apply for assistance from Family Support Services. Care will be taken to ensure other Council members are not aware the applicant is a Council member. The Council member who applied will be able to attend during discussion of their application and will be allowed to vote, but their vote will not count. Minutes of the meeting in regard to Council member's applications will contain only the Council's decision if the request was approved or denied.
6. Council members seeking reimbursement for approved expenses will submit a Travel Expense Account form that must be signed by the individual seeking their expenses, Council chairperson and Controller or Chief Financial Officer. Eligible Council members may seek advance payments of Council approved expenses. All receipts for incurred expenses must be submitted along with Travel Expense Account form.

IV. FAMILY SUPPORT FUNDS GUIDELINES

1. Families seeking goods or services from the Family Support Council will complete an application (see attached). If requested, assistance will be provided to the applicant in completing the application.
2. Applicants to Family Support Services are not required to become consumers of Southern Highlands but will be offered all available services.
3. An applicant must be developmentally disabled and living with their natural families. Proof of developmental delay is required. Recipients of the Birth to Three Program must provide an IFSP and a report detailing the delays dated within the last 12 months that shows a delay of 25% to 39% in three (3) areas or 40% or greater in two (2) areas. All other consumers must have documentation from an educator, therapist, psychologist, medical practitioner. Consumers served by Southern Highlands will have documentation within their medical record.
4. There are no age requirements for applicants to Family Support Services.
5. There are no income requirements or limits for applicants
6. Any applicant for Family Support Services will be afforded the same confidentiality considerations as outlined in this Center's Policy 179.
7. Family Support Funds are funds of "last resort". Applicants are required to submit written verification from two (2) other sources providing the same type of assistance that they have denied or did not cover the complete cost of the item requested. Examples of other sources are:

- Denial from LIEAP or other agencies that provides assistance for utility services.
- Birth to Three denial for equipment or supplies
- Transportation Services for Medicaid consumers
- If a consumer is diagnosed with Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), they must receive a denial letter from the TBI Waiver.
- If the consumer has Title XIX Waiver or PPL, the consumer needs to apply for Environmental Accessibility or Goods and Services before applying for funds that would be eligible under those services. A denial letter must be received.

V. QUALIFYING SERVICES

In an effort to insure that all eligible residents have an equal opportunity to receive funds, the following guidelines will be used by the Council to review multiple requests by the same family.

- If receipts from previous awards were not returned to the center, the Council will deny the request.
1. The Family Support Council will determine allocation of funds to eligible families based on need. Requests must be specific to the consumer's needs.
 - a. Respite Care: Includes care provided as a break to the family in either the family's home or the respite worker's other home.
 - b. Personal Care: Includes assistance with eating, bathing, dressing and other activities of daily living provided in the home or community on a regular basis.
 - c. Child Care: Includes after school program, child day care costs and child care for siblings so that parents can spend time alone with their handicapped child.
 - d. Architectural and Vehicle Modifications: Includes ramps, lifts, door widening, bathroom modification and other needed modifications. The Council will request two (2) contractor's bid for architectural and vehicular modifications. Requests for home repairs must provide proof of ownership (deed or title to a mobile home in the guardian's name). Repairs must be specific to the consumer's needs.
 - e. Equipment and Supplies: Includes individualized adaptations such as special chairs and beds, communication devices and computers. May also include specialized household equipment such as intercoms and air purifiers. Requests for computers, electronic tablets, and other electronic devices MUST have documentation of the need from an educator,

therapist, psychologist or medical practitioner. Council will not consider requests for computers or electronic tablets for applicants under age 12. Council will consider applications for refrigerators, stoves, washers, and dryers. However, the maximum amount the Council will consider for these appliances is \$250.00.

- f. Specialized Nutrition and Clothing: Includes specially prepared food that cannot be purchased at a grocery store and specially made clothing and shoes. Applications for Ensure and Pediasure and other similar nutritional items must have a doctor's order.
 - g. Homemaker Services: Includes home chores, cooking and cleaning.
 - h. Transportation: Includes gas, food and lodging costs associated with special trips related to the person with a disability.
 - i. Utility Costs: Applications for heating assistance will be limited to one time per year from November 1 through March 31 (electric or gas). Applications for assistance for water will also be limited to one time per year. The applicant must submit a copy of a utility bill that has at least a 60 day past due notice. The amount approved will be at the Council's discretion. The Council will not consider applications for television and/or cable.
 - j. Integrated Community Activities: Includes activities that facilitate social integration with peers, such as Boy and Girl Scouts and other community recreation programs.
 - k. Training and Technical Assistance: Includes classes and individualized consultations for parents and other family members that pertain to the needs and/or care of the developmentally delayed family member.
 - l. Vehicle Repair: Requests for vehicle repairs may be approved at the Council's discretion but shall not exceed \$500.00 in the fiscal year (July 1 through June 30). Proof of ownership and two estimates will be required for consideration.
2. A minimum of 25 families will be served with the funds received during each grant allocation period. A report will be provided to the Council at each meeting.
4. All payments will be made to the supplier of the services. If renovations are to be made to property, an initial payment of 50% may be made to the contractor followed by a negotiated payment schedule with the largest amount being paid when the renovations are complete. A purchase order may be used to authorize the services.

5. All family recipients of Family Support funds must submit proof of purchase to the Council that verifies goods and services applied for are actually received. If receipts are not provided, additional applications will not be considered. Receipts must be for approved items. Discrepancies will be reviewed by the Council and may result in the denial of future requests.

VI. EMERGENCY REQUESTS

Emergency requests for Family Support Services funding may be made by eligible families. In the event of an emergency request, telephone approval or denial will be obtained from three members. At the next regularly scheduled Council meeting, the emergency request will be reviewed, entered into the minutes of the meeting and all follow-up monitoring requirements will be initiated.

VII. APPEAL OF DENIED APPLICATIONS

Any family denied goods or services from the Family Support Council may appeal the decision.

1. A letter will be sent to the applicant stating the reason for the denial.
2. The letter will include who to contact to arrange a meeting with the Family Support Council Chair and Center Liaison.
3. A letter outlining the outcome of the meeting will be sent to the applicant within five (5) days of the meeting. The letter will include a copy of the Consumer Grievance Policy (Policy 175).
4. If the applicant continues to believe the application was denied in conflict with this policy, the consumer may file a Consumer Grievance.
5. The consumer will be notified of the outcome of the Consumer Grievance. If the applicant is still not satisfied, they can contact the WV Family Support Coordinator.

VIII. PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

1. The Center Liaison will complete and submit to the State Family Support Council and Coordinator all required reports on a timely basis.
2. The Family Support Council will monitor all allocations of funds to assure services requested by families are received. A report of applicants submitting receipts and other forms of verification must be submitted to the Council.
3. The Council will monitor all funding recipients to assure program effectiveness through a Consumer Satisfaction Screen.

IX. CENTER PROCEDURES

1. All original Family Support applications will be maintained in a monthly file.
2. Each application will be dated upon receipt in order to verify timely processing of Family Support requests.
3. All applications will be reviewed within 48 hours. A letter will be sent to the applicant stating the date of the next meeting and if the application is complete or additional information is needed.
4. No application will be reviewed by the Council until all information is complete.
5. Applications (except emergency applications) must be received at least 3 working days in advance of the meeting. If not, they will be presented at the next meeting.
6. The Center will not accept any responsibility for determining the quality or best price for any item requested. Applications will be approved or denied based on bids, prices, and/or features shown or provided. If the Council wants additional information, pricing, and/or different features, the applicant will be notified and responsible for obtaining that information.
7. Within 3 working days, all applicants will be mailed a letter stating that the application, has been approved, denied, or needs additional information.
8. A request for payment of approved applications will be given to the Chief Financial Officer for approval. Checks will be written based on the availability and projection of Center funds. If the Center cannot issue the check in the next check run, the applicant will be informed that the check will be written upon receipt of funds from the Bureau of Behavioral Health and Health Facilities. This could take six weeks or longer.
9. Minutes of all meetings will be maintained and filed in the Center's Central File. Minutes shall comply with current standards utilized throughout the Center. Minutes must reflect all emergency requests acted upon between Family Support Council meetings for full Council review and documentation of action. Copies of the minutes will be given to the Chief Executive Officer.