

Safer Futures – Guidance for the Use of Emergency Assistance Funds

Safer Futures is a federal Pregnancy Assistance Fund grant made possible to the State of Oregon by the Office of Adolescent Health, Grant #1SP1AH000019. Project sites sub-granted funds through Safer Futures are allowed to budget up to \$10,000 per year for emergency assistance. Emergency assistance is originally defined in the 2013-2017 Safer Futures Funding Grant Application. In that original definition, emergency assistance costs included, but were not limited to items such as child care, bus passes and bus tickets, and payment assistance for a survivor's rent, utilities and telephone bills (only as an emergency service to the survivor). Upon further consultation with the Office of Adolescent Health (OAH), the Oregon Department of Justice, Crime Victims' Services Division (CVSD) offers the following updated and expanded guidance for using these emergency assistance funds.

1. What emergency assistance costs are allowable?

- Child care assistance (under limited circumstances)
- Bus passes/taxi rides
- Survivors' rent, utilities and/or phone bills (includes purchasing minutes on a cell phone)
- Vouchers for shelter (motels) and food
- Laundry (Laundromat costs)
- Baby supplies, including diapers, clothing, car seat, cribs
- Reasonable attorney or court costs

2. What emergency assistance costs are not allowed?

- Medical co-pays or prescriptions
- Over the counter pharmaceutical products
- Gift cards

3. What types of child care assistance are allowable?

Providing financial assistance for childcare is allowable, though such assistance is limited and must be provided with discretion. Examples of circumstances where childcare assistance is allowed include:

- When the survivor must attend a court hearing related to child support, child custody, restraining orders, restitution for harm to persons and property, and in filing criminal charges;
- When the survivor attends an appointment with or a support group offered by the Safer Futures advocate; and
- When the survivor must attend a medical appointment related to her pregnancy and post-natal care.

Childcare providers must be paid directly by Safer Futures via a method of payment that documents and tracks the transaction. Childcare providers must be legally exempt or be licensed by the State of Oregon. If licensed, Safer Futures does not require a particular certification level.

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For more information about Oregon Child Care Licensure visit <http://www.oregon.gov/OCC/OCC%20Forms/LIC/LIC-311/LIC-311.pdf>.

4. What is considered reasonable attorney or court costs?

“Payment of court costs and reasonable attorney and witness fees” is considered an accompaniment service under Category 3 of the Pregnancy Assistance Fund and as defined by 42 USC § 18201. Payment of reasonable attorney and court costs are **allowed** under limited circumstances including:

- Filing fees for divorce, separation, and custody – includes cost of filing paperwork and processing fees;
- Attorney fees to represent a survivor in a contested restraining order, stalking order or sexual assault protective order;
- Attorney fees for an *initial* consultation when a survivor is seeking a divorce; and
- DV criminal case fees (such as legal consultation, retainer fees and associated court fees) - such costs would be incurred for survivors only).

Payment for immigration legal fees is **not allowed**. This includes fees related to obtaining a VAWA visa, U visa, T visa, and passport fees for obtaining the aforementioned visas.

5. Why are certain costs unallowable?

Oregon’s Pregnancy Assistance Fund Grant #1SP1AH000019 falls under Category 3 or “Improving Services for Pregnant Women Who Are Victims of Domestic Violence, Sexual Violence, Sexual Assault, and Stalking”. Grant funds under Category 3 may be spent on “intervention services, accompaniment, and supportive social services” as defined in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act Public Law No. 111-148 § 10213(d) and 42 USC § 18201. While there is generally a large degree of discretion in defining acceptable grant expenditures within these categories, medical co-pays, prescriptions, and over the counter pharmaceutical products are not allowable and not encompassed within the statutory language.

While the statute does not explicitly restrict us from purchasing gift cards, OAH strongly discourages us from purchasing gift cards for use in emergency situations. OAH recommends that we use vouchers rather than gift cards to eliminate the potential risk of fraud associated with the distribution of gift cards. However, gift cards may be purchased as an incentive for Safer Futures eligible participants and project partners to engage them in certain activities, such as completing a survey or attending a certain number of support groups. Gift cards used for incentives must be purchased with funds other those designated for Emergency Assistance.

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6. Other questions?

Q: Are Safer Futures emergency assistance funds available for the father of an infant who is fleeing from intimate partner violence perpetrated by the child’s mother?

A: No, fathers are not eligible to receive emergency assistance funds or any other types of services through Safer Futures and as defined by Category #3 of the Pregnancy Assistance Fund Federal Funding Opportunity Announcement.

This guidance is intended to answer any questions that you may have about using emergency assistance funds to support participants. Please contact Christine Heyen, Safer Futures Fund Coordinator at (503) 378-5303 or Christine.p.heyen@doj.state.or.us with any questions you have that are not answered in this document.