

**Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services
Flexible Funding Guidance for the DESE/DDS Program
Supporting Families During the Coronavirus Pandemic
UPDATE - March 31, 2020**

In light of these challenging and stressful times and the extraordinary demands on families as they care for their loved one with a disability at home, the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) is providing updated guidance for the use of Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE)/DDS allocations. We want to be as helpful and responsive in addressing the emerging needs of families by creating more flexibility in the use of available DESE/DDS funding. It is also important to maintain adequate reporting and tracking mechanisms of this funding. Depending on the length of the current crisis and the Governor's declared state of emergency, this guidance may be updated as needed to address any changing circumstances.

During the state of emergency, DDS will permit families to use resources to meet their needs from unspent funds from either the personnel line or the ancillary line in the budget, as outlined below. Please note that some areas listed below are new and not typically covered within the DESE/DDS budget, and we have expanded the definitions of Ancillary Good and Services to include: food emergencies; household supplies (disinfectants, wipes, bleach, tissues); medications and over the counter medicines; and educational, leisure, and recreational materials. Additional funding may be allocated to a family if their total budget is exceeded. To appropriately track all expenses as a result of the COVID-19 emergency, all changes will need to be reflected on the attached Expenditure Plan.

Short-Term Emergency Needs

Many families will be experiencing the need for short-term emergency assistance to help them continue to provide care for their family member with a disability. This may include food for the entire family and household supplies (disinfectants, wipes, bleach, tissues). Some families may experience more severe emergencies such as housing insecurity, utility issues, and transportation problems; these emergencies will be addressed on a case by case basis by the DDS Area or Regional Office.

Adaptive Equipment and Supplies/Assistive Technology

Flexible funding allocations can be used to purchase adaptive equipment and assistive technology devices, such as tablets, Chromebooks, or handheld gaming devices, to help create access for individuals with disabilities and family members to a variety of online resources and virtual and remote supports.

This funding may also be used to purchase a variety of technological supports that can be used at home to help individuals communicate with family and friends and engage in activities for educational or recreational purposes, including art supplies, games, and sensory items. Families may also consider the purchase of additional reinforcers for their family member as well as diversional activities.

Flexible Funding Options

Providers must be flexible in efforts to ensure families' needs are met. Families may be able to receive their stipend funding in the following ways:

- Reimbursement to families from the DESE provider for expenses incurred for allowable services and goods.
- Payment directly to a vendor by the DESE provider for specific allowable goods and services requested by the family.
- Direct payment to families in the form of a stipend for purchase of allowable goods and services.
- Online orders of groceries and supplies for the family coordinated by the vendor or provider.
- Gift cards to buy groceries and household supplies.

Online Ordering

Providers may order food and supplies online for home delivery.

- Providers must track these orders, identifying: the recipient, purchase date, amount, and purpose.
- It is recommended that these orders be limited to \$100/week but this may vary depending on family size or other circumstances.

Gift Cards

Gift cards may be used to help address basic needs, such as purchasing groceries and other essential items including cleaning and medical supplies, if the family is unable to cash a check.

- It is strongly advised to purchase gift cards from local supermarkets (Market Basket, Stop & Shop, Big Y, Costco, and Target). However, it is also understood that in certain areas there may be a need to shop at local and independent grocery stores, and in those situations, other gift cards can be made available (VISA or MasterCard).
- The recommended amount of gift cards at any given time is \$100/week but this may vary depending on family size or other circumstances.
- When gift cards are used, providers should carefully track them by keeping a record of the identifier number on the card; purchase date; amount; child's name; and family navigator.
- Providers should request that families save and submit receipts from their purchases with gift cards.
- For providers who have less experience using gift cards, please reach out for assistance to either the Regional Family Support Director or DDS Statewide DESE/DDS Program Manager Ellen Kilicarlsan (Ellen.Kilicarlsan@mass.gov).

Intermittent Child Care

The Intermittent Child Care line has been increased from \$1,800 to \$2,200 to align with the new per quarter and per year limit set by the federal Internal Revenue Service (IRS).

Authorization / Communication

DESE/DDS Family Navigators should be in regular communication with DDS Area and/or Regional Offices. If the family's individual budget does not have funds available to be reallocated or the family is experiencing a major problem, the Area/Region may provide additional funding.

Reporting and Tracking Expenditures

It is important for DDS to document funding provided to families related to COVID-19. The DESE/DDS Family Navigator and family will document the temporary plan on the attached Expenditure Plan. Families are expected to retain and submit receipts including proof of payment for all expenses. DDS strongly advises families to take a picture of the receipt as additional proof of payment. Providers should document that the family has agreed to the plan verbally on the signature line with the date of the call. These plans will be submitted to Area Offices at a later date.

Questions

All questions regarding this guidance should be directed to a Regional Family Support Director. If emailing, please copy the DDS Statewide DESE/DDS Program Manager, Ellen Kilicarslan (Ellen.Kilicarslan@mass.gov).

Please note, there is separate guidance for DESE/DDS families using the DESE/DDS Portal at PPL.

Department of Developmental Services
TRACKING FOR DESE PARTICIPANTS – EXPANDED ANCILLARY GOODS and SERVICES
March 2020 through June 2020 related to COVID 19

Student's Name: _____ DDS Area Office: _____
 Family's Name: _____ DDS Service Coordinator: _____
 Family's Address: _____ Family Email Address: _____
 DOB: _____ DESE Provider: _____
 Telephone #: _____ DESE Family Navigator: _____

Please indicate how you plan to use your stipend allocation, and report the total amount for each category and the specific purpose.

Category	Allowable Expenditures	\$ Amount	Purpose/Specific Uses
1	Respite Support/Child Care		
2	Educational Materials, Leisure and Recreational Supplies: puzzles, crayons, paper, software, colored pencils, etc		
3	Specialized Nutritional Supplements includes food to increase food security		
4	Chore will include home supplies: disinfectants, gloves, wipes, bleach, tissues etc.		
5	Uncovered Medical Supplies and Services		
6	Other approved use (specify)		
	Grand Total:		

Families are responsible to retain and submit receipts for the above expenditures either by mail, by scanning or by faxing them to your family navigator.

Family Signature and Date/or Date Plan Discussed with Family: _____ **Date:** _____
DESE Navigator/Agency Staff Person Signature: _____ **Date:** _____
DDS Area Office Signature (if required): _____ **Date:** _____