

**Topic:** North Central WIB JFES Special Benefits Policy and Procedure

**Number:** 02 - 2003

**Effective Date:** November 1, 2003; Updated 2/15/05; 4/25/05; 7/1/08; 11/1/10

**Applies to:** North Central Region JFES Staff

**Approved By:** CWP Chief Operating Officer

**Definitions:** Process by which special benefits to support JFES customer activities are requested and issued.

**Other Policy references:** Connecticut Dept. of Labor Jobs First Policy and Procedures Manual;

### General Policy

All special benefits must be issued in accordance with state policy. Career agents should review the Connecticut Department of Labor Jobs First Employment Services Program Policy & Procedures Manual (PPM) Section 1225: Employment Plan and Section 1410: Transportation/Baby-sitting Special Benefits. The manual can be downloaded from [www.ctdol.state.ct.us/weltowrk/manual0416.pdf](http://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/weltowrk/manual0416.pdf).

Special benefits will be issued only to support activities that are in the Employment Plan and recorded in CTWBS. This includes both ongoing, regularly scheduled activities and short-term, intermittent activities such as attendance at Orientation and Plan Review, and appointments.

Career agents are responsible for explaining the allowable use of Special Benefits to JFES customers, emphasizing that Special Benefits may be issued only to support participation in activities that are included in the employment plan and documented in CTWBS. This includes attendance at JFES Orientation prior to receipt of TFA under the state's Universal Engagement requirement.

Career agents must communicate to JFES customers that Special Benefits are not an entitlement but must be requested and approved based on the customer's inability to participate in employment plan activities without the benefits at the time that the request is made. The career agent must confirm continued participation in the activity and continued need for the special benefit before submitting the request; WIB staff will review the employment plan to verify this information before issuing the benefit in EMS.

### Special Benefit Request & Issuance Procedures: Short-Term Participation Allowance [PPM 1410 B 2]

The short-term participation allowance is issued in the amount of \$10 per day and is only allowable to support participation in intermittent activities. This type of benefit may be issued for no more than five days within a one month period.

#### Career Agent procedures

1. Record the activity in the Employment Plan. Be sure to enter the applicable start and end dates, either estimated (if the request is made in advance) or actual. If the activity occurs before the request is submitted, the actual start date must be recorded before the request can be processed. The activity may be a JFES employment activity, a WIA activity, a Labor Exchange activity or an Other Participant Activity, such as an appointment. – OR – Be sure that the customer has been scheduled for a Workshop if that is the activity for which the benefit is needed. If the request is submitted or received after the workshop takes place, CTWBS must show that the customer attended the workshop.
2. Determine whether short-term benefits are needed for this activity. For example, baby-sitting should not be paid during the school day if children are school-age, or when Care 4 Kids is paying for child care for an activity that is concurrent with the intermittent activity; transportation should not be paid if special benefits have been issued to purchase a bus pass for a period that includes the day of the activity if it is on the bus line.
3. Determine whether benefits are available through another source. For example, Medicaid provides transportation to services that are covered by Medicaid such as medical appointments. Special Benefits cannot be issued when other resources are available.
4. Record the request for Special Benefits in the Employment Plan.
  - a. Select the Case Manager Activity – Issue a Special Benefit.
  - b. Enter the activity for which the benefit is needed in the "Activity Name/Description" field. When the benefit is for JFES Orientation, please use "STS Orientation" as the Activity Name/Description. Other activities that may require the Short-Term Participation

Allowance are "JFES Plan Review", "Update Appointment", "Job Fair" or "Resume Workshop".

- c. Enter the date of the activity as Estimated Start Date and as the Estimated End Date.
  - d. In the notes field, begin with the date, then describe the benefit requested, then end with your name, CM, and "NC". For example, "10/28/08 - \$10 for baby-sitting and bus fare. Appointment is after school hours. J. Doe, CM, NC."
  - e. Click Submit.
  - f. On the Activities Screen, click the Refer link on the Issue a Special Benefit activity that you just created.
  - g. Select the designated WIB staff person. Case management providers will be kept informed of the appropriate WIB staff to whom to send requests.
  - h. Click Save.
  - i. The activity status will be "Pending Referral Response" until WIB staff review and accept or decline the request.
5. Monitor your To-Do List regularly; if a request is declined a task will appear on your To-Do List that says "You need to refer [Customer Name] to another service provider for Issue a Special Benefit, your request to service provider [WIB staff name] was rejected".
- a. When you get a rejection message, click DO and read the reason for the rejection.
  - b. If you have additional information that may change the WIB staff decision, record it in the Activity Notes.
    - i. Go to the customer's Employment Plan.
    - ii. Click on details for Issue a Special Benefit.
    - iii. Add a new activity note, beginning with the date and ending with your name and "CM, NC." For example, "10/29/08 – the appointment is scheduled for 6:30 pm, and buses stop running at 5:55 pm. Client needs to give neighbor gas money for ride. J. Doe, CM, NC."
    - iv. Submit.
    - v. Refer the activity again; WIB staff will review the additional information and reconsider the request.
6. Review the plan regularly to determine when the benefit has been issued.

#### WIB staff procedures

1. When task appears on your To-Do List, click Do and click the customer name to view the details of the case.
2. Review the case to ensure that activity is in the Plan, and is eligible and appropriate for special benefits support.
3. Review other issuances information to ensure that the activity is not already covered by other benefits; review child care information link when babysitting is requested and the plan shows other activities concurrent with the intermittent activity.
4. Review EMS to ensure that the benefit was not previously issued.
  - a. If the issuance is approved:
    - i. Click DO and accept the task of issuing the benefit.
    - ii. Issue the benefit in EMS for payment to customer's EBT. Print EMS screen and place in customer file.
    - iii. Update CTWBS activity details in the Employment Plan.
      1. Enter date of issuance as the Actual Start Date and Actual End Date.
      2. Enter an activity note stating that the benefit was issued in EMS, beginning with the date and ending with your name and "NCWIB".
      3. Click My Cases to remove the case from your caseload.
  - b. If benefit is denied:
    - i. Click DO and record the reason for the denial. The reason must include the date, your name and NCWIB.
    - ii. Click Decline.

#### Special Benefit Request & Issuance Procedures: Transportation Benefits for Ongoing Activities [PPM 1410 B 1]

Transportation benefits for ongoing activities are to be issued when reimbursement of the cost of transportation to and from the activity location(s) is necessary to permit participation. Special Benefits for Transportation should generally be requested in advance. Under certain circumstances, benefits may be

requested for the prior month and the upcoming month. Such retroactive requests must be justified and should be explained in the activity note associated with the request for issuance in CTWBS.

Guidance for determining transportation benefits:

- Mileage: reimbursements are based on actual miles traveled, within a range of 5 to 50 miles per day.
- Public transportation: benefits may be issued for purchase of a monthly bus pass when allowable activities are scheduled 4 days per week or more. When allowable activities are scheduled for 3 days per week or fewer, benefits will be issued based on the cost of a 1-day bus pass for each day of activity (currently \$3.25 per day in the North Central region).

Career Agent procedures

1. Record the activity in the Employment Plan.
2. Determine whether the activity is eligible and appropriate for special benefits support. Special Benefits cannot be provided for unsubsidized employment or unstructured job search.
3. Determine whether transportation is available from another source, such as Medicaid or directly from the service provider. Special Benefits cannot be issued when other resources are available.
4. Add the Case Manager activity "Issue Special Benefit for Transportation" to the Employment Plan in CTWBS. Review the plan as needed to determine when benefits have been issued. This can easily be done by clicking the "Activity Notes" hyperlink at the left of the Profile screen. Enter the name and provider of the activity in the Activity Name/Description Activity field. For example, Group Job Search – CT Works or Skills Training – Asnuntuck Community College-Enfield.
  - a. Enter the start date of the activity in the Estimated Start Date field, or if this is not the first request, the start date of the period for which benefits are requested. Enter the end date of the period for which the transportation benefit is requested in the estimated end date field. This may be no more than one month after the estimated start date.
  - b. Enter an activity note specifying the nature, time period and amount of the request. For example, \$45 bus pass for 11/3/08 – 12/2/08, or Mileage to Asnuntuck Community College, 170 Elm Street, Enfield, for month of November – 10 miles round trip x 20 days x .40 = \$80.00. As always, begin with the date and end with your name, CA and NC.
    - i. Special requirements for mileage reimbursement:
      1. The street address of locations other than CT Works must be specified in the activity note. Round trip mileage should be verified using Yahoo!Maps; when the round trip miles exceed the distance calculated by Yahoo!Maps by more than 5 miles, an explanation will be required. For example, customer drives to and from school and day care center to pick up and drop off 3 children.
      2. If mileage reimbursement is requested for travel to a variety of locations, instruct the customer to complete the Customer Mileage log. If a mileage log is used, the log must be faxed to North Central WIB staff and the activity note must include the total miles and amount requested as well as a statement that a mileage log has been submitted.
5. Monitor your To-Do List regularly; if a request is declined a task will appear on your list that says "You need to refer [Customer Name] to another service provider for Issue a Special Benefit for Transportation, your request to service provider [WIB staff name] was rejected".
  - a. When you get a rejection message, click Do and read the reason for the rejection.
    - i. If you have additional information that may change the WIB staff decision, record it in Activity Notes.

NOTE: THE MAXIMUM MILEAGE REIMBURSEMENT IS 50 MILES PER DAY, REGARDLESS OF ACTUAL MILES TRAVELLED, AND THE MINIMUM REIMBURSEMENT IS \$2.00 PER DAY, REGARDLESS OF ACTUAL MILES TRAVELLED.

1. Go to the customer's Employment Plan.
2. Click Details for Issue a Special Benefit for Transportation.
3. Add a note following the original note, beginning with the date and ending with your name and "CM, NC".
4. Submit.
5. Refer the activity again; WIB staff will reconsider your request.
- ii. If you have no additional information and the denial is final, the activity status will be rejected. Click Details and enter a brief note of the reason for the denial. For example, "denied, TFA closing, customer moving out of state".
6. Review the plan as needed to determine when benefits have been issued.

#### WIB staff procedures

1. When task appears on your To-Do List, click Do and click the customer name to view the details of the case.
2. Review the case to ensure that activity is in the Plan, and is eligible and appropriate for special benefits support.
3. Review other issuances information to ensure that the activity is not already covered by other benefits; review child care information link when babysitting is requested and the plan shows other activities concurrent with the intermittent activity.
4. Review EMS to ensure that the benefit was not previously issued.
  - a. If the issuance is approved:
    - iii. Click DO and accept the task of issuing the benefit.
    - iv. Issue the benefit in EMS for payment to customer's EBT. Print EMS screen and place in customer file.
    - v. Update CTWBS activity details in the Employment Plan.
      1. Enter date of issuance as the Actual Start Date and Actual End Date.
      2. Enter an activity note stating that the benefit was issued in EMS, beginning with the date and ending with your name and "NCWIB".
      3. Click My Cases to remove the case from your caseload.
  - b. If the benefit is denied:
    - vi. Click DO and record the reason for the denial. The reason must include the date, your name and NCWIB.
    - vii. Click Decline.

When a request is declined, it may be resubmitted with additional information. The information should be responsive to the specific reason noted when the request was declined. For example, if the reason was that benefits for the purchase of a monthly bus pass were issued two weeks ago, the additional information might be that the request is for a new activity that takes place at a time that buses don't run, or it is not on a bus line.

#### Processing Time Frames

WIB staff will make every effort to issue benefits in EMS within three business days of receiving requests. The EMS batch schedule may affect the time frame for actual deposits to customers' EBT accounts, particularly during the last week of the month.

#### Response to Customer Inquiries

EMS automatically sends a notice to the customer when the benefit is deposited to the EBT account. This letter includes the name and telephone number of the WIB staff person who processed the Special Benefit request in EMS. Any customer inquiring about a Special Benefit request that has not been received by the WIB will be referred to the career agent. Customers must be instructed to maintain contact with their career agents in order to qualify for Special Benefits, and that customers must request Special Benefits from their career agents, not from the person whose name appeared on any EMS notice of a prior issuance.