~~9.4. TRANSPORTATION ASSISTANCE PILOT PROGRAM (TAPP)~~

**~~Summary:~~** ~~Transportation can be a significant barrier for youth in foster care, particularly in geographic areas where public transportation options are limited or nonexistent. Having access to transportation allows young people to gain employment, pursue education opportunities, and gain independence and success. However, it is estimated that less than 5% of teens in foster care obtain their driver’s license by their 18th birthday (Virginia Commission on Youth, 2018).~~

~~Child and Family Services Division (CFSD) is committed to ensuring that youth in foster care have equal access to positive experiences that support normalcy and skill development which will assist them as they transition to adulthood. Removing the financial behaviors associated with obtaining a driver’s license and purchasing a vehicle supports youth with achieving a key developmental milestone and allows greater access to additional opportunities.~~

**~~Purpose:~~** ~~This policy establishes the agency's practice related to funding transportation assistance for older youth through the John H. Chafee Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood (Chafee Program) through the Virginia Department of Social Services. This policy also outlines the process for providing transportation assistance for older youth not eligible for federal funding.~~

**~~Scope:~~** ~~Applies to all CFSD employees and clients aged 14 through 22 (Chafee) or 14 through 21 (CSA) who are eligible for funding assistance. The Transportation Assistance Pilot Program is funded through Chafee Funds based on local jurisdiction need based requests. Office of Children’s Services Children’s Services Act funds will be used for the same purposes to assist undocumented youth in foster care. The current pilot program will end September 30, 2024, or earlier contingent on available funds.~~

# ~~Definitions:~~

**~~Chafee Program/Funds:~~** ~~The John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood (the Chafee program) provides funding to support youth/ young adults in or formerly in foster care in their transition to adulthood~~**~~.~~** ~~Chafee funds are used to assist youth/ young adults in a wide variety of areas designed to support a successful transition to adulthood. Activities and programs include help with education, employment, financial management, housing, transportation, emotional support and assured connections to caring adults.~~

**~~Children’s Services Act Funding:~~** ~~The Children’s Services Act (CSA) is now the name for a law enacted in 1993 that establishes a single state pool of funds to purchase services for at- risk youth and their families. The state funds, combined with local community funds, are managed by local interagency teams who plan and monitor services to youth.~~

**~~Independent Living Program:~~** ~~Youth services that assist youth in foster care ages 14-21 in developing necessary life skills to support a transition from foster care into independent living as they reach adulthood. Services are based on a written assessment of life skills and include educational, vocational, life skills training and outreach services.~~

**~~Undocumented youth:~~** ~~refers to youth who are not U.S. citizens or permanent residents of the United States, who do not hold a visa to reside in the U.S. and who have not applied for legal residency in the U.S.~~

**~~Implementation Responsibility:~~** ~~The Director of the Child and Family Services Division (CFSD) adopts this policy to be consistent with the Department of Human Services’ mission and applicable federal and state laws and regulations, including but not limited to the Child Abuse and Prevention Treatment Act of 1974 and its implementing regulations, The John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Act of 1999, the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008, the Family First Prevention Services Act of 2018 and its implementing regulations, and all applicable sections of the Virginia Department of Social Services and the Office of Children’s Services guidance. It shall be the responsibility of all CFSD staff to comply with this policy. The Bureau and Division Directors must ensure that this policy is implemented and regularly monitored.~~

# ~~Policy Detail:~~

**~~Eligibility Criteria for Accessing Chafee Funds through TAPP~~**

* ~~Youth currently in foster care/Fostering Futures ages 14-21 years old.~~
* ~~Youth who transitioned out of Fostering Futures still under the age of 23.~~
* ~~Youth who were in foster care after the age 14 and achieved reunification.~~
* ~~Youth who transitioned out of foster care after age 16 through Kinship Guardianship Assistance Program (KinGAP) or Adoption.~~
* ~~Youth who are eligible to receive federal funding.~~

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# ~~Eligibility Barriers:~~

* ~~Youth who are demonstrating noncompliance with their service plan including case manager visits, and regular attendance at school and/or employment.~~
* ~~Youth who are demonstrating risky behaviors that endanger themselves and others as evidenced by incarceration, runaway status or placement in secure congregate care settings or hospitals.~~
* ~~Undocumented youth are not eligible to access Chafee funding and therefore are not eligible to use TAPP funds.~~
* ~~Group homes may have insurance barriers of being able to place or provide care for a youth with a driver’s license and/or a car.~~
* ~~Chafee funds cannot be used to cover court fines, outstanding debt, unpaid fees, reinstatement fees or traffic violation tickets.~~
* ~~Funding is available until September 30, 2024, or earlier contingent on available funds.~~
* ~~The Division Director reserves the right to refuse to fund transportation assistance for any youth who demonstrates behavior that risks personal safety and the safety of others.~~

# ~~Transportation Assistance Categories:~~

~~Chafee funds can be used to provide driving and transportation assistance to youth who experienced foster care at age 14 or older and are under age 23. Funds may be used to aid with~~

~~the initial purchase or deposit toward a vehicle, not to exceed $4000.00 per vehicle per fiscal year. Any single expenditure of $5,000 and over requires approval by the federal government via the VDSS Youth Services Supervisor. There is a cap on funding not to exceed $7,000 per youth per local fiscal year.~~

~~The transportation assistance categories are as follows:~~

* ~~Vehicle Purchase~~
* ~~Car Insurance Increases to Foster Parent/Caregiver Policy~~
* ~~Car Insurance -Youth Policy~~
* ~~Car Payment~~
* ~~Car Repairs~~
* ~~Driving School~~
* ~~DMV Fees~~
* ~~Emergency Kits/Roadside Assistance Memberships~~
* ~~Gas/Gas Card~~
* ~~RideShare~~
* ~~Other Transportation Expenses~~

# ~~Vehicle Purchase~~

~~Funds may be used to aid with the initial purchase or deposit toward a vehicle, not to exceed~~

~~$4000.00 per vehicle per fiscal year. Purchases can include a car, electric bike/scooter and bicycle.~~

# ~~Car Insurance Increases to Foster Parent/Caregiver Policy~~

~~Funds can also be used to cover the additional cost to a foster/caregiver family’s car insurance for adding a youth to their policy to cover any deductible costs associated with a youth vehicle incident. Funds can be used to support additional coverage for up to six months per fiscal year. The youth’s permanency must be KINGAP, relative placement/return home or adoption.~~

~~Appropriate documentation to verify proof of insurance and/or any increases required.~~

# ~~Car Insurance for Youth Policy~~

~~Funds can be used to pay for up to 6 months of car insurance for a youth’s personal car insurance policy.~~

# ~~Car Payment~~

~~Funds can be used to support a youth’s car payments for up to 6 months per fiscal year.~~

# ~~Car Repairs~~

~~Funds can be used for supporting youth with routine maintenance and emergency repairs or services to their vehicle to include oil changes, tire rotation and alignments.~~

# ~~Driver’s Education and Skill building Support~~

~~Virginia residents under age 19, must complete a state-approved driver education program and hold a Virginia learner’s permit for at least nine months to obtain a driver’s license. Funds can be used for completing driver's education through private providers when not able to complete in a public-school setting. Transportation funds can also support completion of behind-the-wheel hours to obtain driver's license and promote driving safety. If the youth is under the age of 18, the foster parent/caregiver must certify that the youth has driven for at least 45 hours and that~~

~~at least 15 of the 45 hours were completed after sunset.~~

# ~~Department of Motor Vehicle (DMV) Fees~~

~~Funds may be used in supporting youth with DMV fees associated with obtaining licenses, permits and vehicle registration to include registration fees and property taxes.~~

# ~~Emergency Preparedness and Safety Equipment~~

~~Funds can be used to purchase equipment to assist safety preparedness for maintenance and emergencies. Equipment purchases include road flares, jumper cables, car jack, phone mount, ice scraper/snow brush, and AAA memberships.~~

# ~~Gas/Gas Card~~

~~Funds can be used to reimburse the purchase of gas and for gas cards that enable the youth to achieve or participate in an independent living skill identified in the youth transition plan such as employment, educational, enrichment and training activities.~~

# ~~Ride Share~~

~~Funds can support the purchase of transportation by cab, Uber/LYFT rides or county contracted vendor to support participation in or achievement of an IL skill development identified in the youth transition plan such as transportation assistance to employment, educational, enrichment and training activities.~~

# ~~Other Transportation Expenses~~

~~If the request for a resource, service, or reimbursement is not specifically stated as an approved expenditure in this policy, a memorandum and the supporting documentation regarding the expenses, must be reviewed and approved by the Division Director and sent to the VDSS Youth Services Supervisor for approval.~~

# ~~Procedures:~~

~~Transitional Living Plan (TLP) meetings are held annually with each youth aged 14 and older in foster care. When educational and/or independent living services are needed, the IL Coordinator arranges a meeting with the youth and case manager to discuss eligibility and funding. Case managers are expected to meet with the youth and the caregiver regarding their transportation needs and incorporate this into case planning and service provision. Case managers are expected to hold consistent discussions during monthly visitation regarding the youth’s independent living and transportation needs and document in the electronic record.~~

~~To access funds:~~

1. ~~IL Coordinator or Supervisor confirms that funds are available, and that youth has not met maximum funding allotments.~~
2. ~~Case manager requesting funds submits completed Pre-Authorization Form to IL Coordinator along with supporting documentation for approval. The case manager must obtain two signatures on the pre-authorization form.~~
3. ~~IL Coordinator records the approved funds on the IL Funds tracking spreadsheet.~~
4. ~~IL Coordinator sends transportation assistance request describing the service needed with the budget amount to the VDSS Youth Services Supervisor. Upon approval, the Fiscal/Administrative Officer will submit a BRS request through LASER to Budget Line 862 with the approved requested amount.~~
5. ~~The case manager is expected to follow purchase of services processes including obtaining preauthorization when using the purchase card, paying vendors and when applicable to providing funds to the youth directly.~~

# ~~Driver’s License and Driver’s Education~~

~~Transportation assistance may fund the cost of a youth’s driver’s education course up to~~

~~$800.00.~~

~~Before a youth can begin a driver’s education course, the following must occur:~~

1. ~~The youth, parent(s), caregiver and case manager mutually decide that the youth is ready to manage the responsibility of operating a motor vehicle. If the parent is not actively engaged in the youth’s life, the remaining parties must decide.~~
2. ~~The case manager obtains signatures on the consent form for driver’s education and submits along with a pre-authorization form to the supervisor, Independent Living Coordinator and the Bureau Director.~~
3. ~~The case manager along with the caregiver facilitates the selection of a convenient driver’s education course for the youth~~
4. ~~The youth must meet all Virginia Department of Motor Vehicle requirements including:~~
   1. ~~Valid proof of age, identity, legal presence, Virginia residency, and social security number (photocopied documentation is not acceptable)~~
   2. ~~If the youth is under age 19, he/she must complete a state-approved driver education program.~~
   3. ~~If the youth is age 19 or older and has never held a driver's license issued by Virginia, another state, a U.S. territory, or foreign country, or cannot show proof that they previously held such a license, they must show proof that either they passed an approved driver education course; or have held a Virginia learner's permit at least 30 days (about 4 and a half weeks) before taking the DMV road skills test.~~

# ~~Vehicle Purchases~~

~~Before a youth can receive financial support towards purchasing a car, the following is required:~~

1. ~~The case manager, the parent(s), caregiver and youth mutually determine that the youth is prepared to handle the responsibility of operating and owning a motor vehicle.~~
2. ~~The vehicle must be used as a primary means of transportation to support youth’s employment, education or independent living goals.~~
3. ~~The youth must provide a copy of a valid driver's license and driving record with no evidence of Driving under the Influence (DUI) or Driving while Impaired (DWI) on driving record.~~
4. ~~The youth must demonstrate an ability to maintain any payments, insurance and other expenses associated with owning a vehicle as evidenced by at least three consecutive months of employment.~~
5. ~~The youth must submit a vehicle valuation from an automotive research company that is recognized by both consumers and the automotive industry such as Kelly Bluebook. If the assessed condition of the vehicle is not supported by the purchase price, funds cannot be used to purchase the vehicle. The case manager must ensure documentation for the mechanic’s inspections and Kelly Blue Book is maintained in the case file and uploaded into the electronic record.~~
6. ~~A complete report of all publicly available information about the vehicle such as provided by Carfax and a current vehicle status report from a reputable mechanic.~~
7. ~~There must be evidence of an identified insurance provider for liability coverage along with a sustainable plan for making payments on the insurance.~~
8. ~~The youth must complete Real Cost of Car Ownership workshop with the Independent Living Coordinator.~~

# ~~Vehicle Payments~~

~~Funds can be used to support a youth’s car payments for up to 6 months per fiscal year. Before a youth can receive financial support towards vehicle payments, the following is required:~~

* 1. ~~The case manager, the parent(s), caregiver and youth mutually determine that the youth is prepared to handle the responsibility of operating and owning a motor vehicle.~~
  2. ~~The vehicle must be used as a primary means of transportation to support youth’s employment, education or independent living goals.~~
  3. ~~The youth must provide a copy of a valid driver's license and driving record with no evidence of Driving under the Influence (DUI) or Driving while Impaired (DWI) on driving record.~~
  4. ~~The youth must demonstrate an ability to maintain any payments, insurance and other expenses associated with owning a vehicle as evidenced by at least three consecutive months of employment.~~

# ~~Car Insurance~~

~~The youth can be supported with vehicle premiums up to six months per fiscal year.~~

~~When supporting youth who will be added to a foster/kin caregiver policy, the case manager must:~~

1. ~~Obtain verification of insurance from the caregiver.~~
2. ~~Provide evidence of policy change and increase in policy amount.~~
3. ~~Ensure that caregiver provides written consent of policy increase on the Insurance Policy Increase Authorization Form.~~
4. ~~Gain approval for funding through pre-authorization process for payment.~~

~~When supporting youth who will have an individual insurance policy, the case manager must:~~

1. ~~Ensure that youth have employment for at least three consecutive months, a sustainability plan and a mechanism for paying insurance after the six-month period~~
2. ~~Support the youth in exploring and selecting insurance coverage options and affordable premiums by providing three estimates for comparison. The youth are not required to accept the least expensive option.~~
3. ~~Obtain evidence of policy premium amount.~~
4. ~~Ensure that the vehicle is titled in the youth’s name to secure payment.~~
5. ~~Gain approval for funding through a pre-authorization process for payment.~~

# ~~Vehicle Repairs~~

~~When supporting youth who may need vehicle repairs, the following is required:~~

1. ~~The vehicle must be registered in the youth’s name and there is sufficient documentation that the vehicle is the primary transportation used by the youth for work, school or independent living activities.~~
2. ~~The youth must provide written cost of repairs as estimated by a certified mechanic unless an emergency occurs outside regular business hours. If the youth have an after- hours emergency, the case manager must seek approval from funding manager and Bureau Director.~~
3. ~~The cost of repairs may not exceed $900. The youth will be responsible for any additional costs.~~

# ~~Gas Card/Rideshare Gift Card Purchases~~

~~Youth may be assisted with transportation through gas cards when used for a documented transportation need to employment, education or other activity related to self-sufficiency.~~

~~Before a youth can receive transportation support through gift and/or rideshare card purchases, case managers must:~~

1. ~~Complete Pre-Authorization Form to make the needed purchase for the youth.~~
2. ~~Once the card is purchased, the card and receipt must be submitted to the Gift Card Manager to be logged in and note that this is for TAPP.~~
3. ~~Utilize the gift card request form to request the gift and follow the gift card distribution process which includes obtaining a signed receipt from the youth.~~

**~~Missing Gift Cards:~~** ~~If gift cards are lost, the employee noticing the lost gift card must immediately complete an incident report. The incident report is given to the Administrative Officer, who communicates the information to the compliance office.~~

**~~Transportation assistance for youth in foster care who have an undocumented status~~** ~~The Office of Children’s Services will allow Children’s Services Act (CSA) funding to be used for those~~

~~youth who are ineligible for Chafee funds due to undocumented status. CSA funding may be used for youth up through age 21.Every effort must be made to plan with youth to access transportation assistance while the youth is CSA eligible. Funding up to $4,000 can be used for the purchase of a vehicle. Any single expenditure of $5,000 and over requires the approval of the Division Director. There is a cap on funding not to exceed $7,000 per youth per local fiscal year. The CSA Coordinator will be responsible for tracking expenditures and the approvals. The Family Assessment Planning Team must recommend, and the Community Policy Management Team authorize funding for CSA fund allocation. All documentation requirements must be met, and fiscal processes followed to obtain CSA funding. All expectations and requirements for transportation assistance must be followed regardless of the funding source.~~

~~If the youth is aged 22 and has an undocumented status, CSA funds cannot be accessed. The case manager must consult with the Bureau Director and the Division Director to advocate for alternative funding.~~

# ~~Reporting Requirements~~

~~The Independent Living Coordinator must complete the quarterly transportation form for all transportation related expenses. The IL screens in the youth's electronic health record must reflect youth activity and progress with achieving developmental milestones, barriers and decision-making in addition to any payments made on behalf of the youth and reconcile with the quarterly reports.~~

# ~~Quality Assurance and Monitoring~~

~~Quarterly inventory accounting of all gift cards and purchases will be conducted by the Management and Budget Analyst. Annually, the Administrative Officer will conduct an audit of controls, procedures and gift card counts. Additionally, the Quality Assurance team will review the clinical record and supporting documentation in the case file. The results of the audit will be made available to the DHS Budget Coordinator or designee.~~