



TANF EARN & WORK READY SUPPORTIVE SERVICES POLICY

Purpose

Partner4Work, through a network of providers, ensures the availability of appropriate and necessary supportive services to assist program participants. The purpose of this policy is to articulate how supportive service dollars are permitted to be provided to participants of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Extended TANF (ETANF) Employment and Training programs: Employment Advancement and Retention Network (EARN) and Work Ready.

Affected Parties

This policy applies to all TANF participants in Allegheny County EARN and Work Ready programs. Allegheny County EARN and Work Ready staff are responsible for implementing this policy.

References

- EARN Manual
- PA DHS Cash Assistance Handbook
- SPAL Desk Guide
- Work Ready Manual
- 55 Pa. Code § 165.45

Definition of Key Terms

Supportive Services: Individuals participating in approved TANF activities, including approved education and training (E&T) activities, are eligible to receive "supportive services" or "special needs payments" to help individuals find and keep a job that will support their family.

Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible for supportive services, TANF EARN and Work Ready participants must:

- Be a participant in the Allegheny County EARN/Work Ready program, in good standing with program requirements and expectations.
- Undergo a comprehensive household assessment that identifies strengths and barriers to employment and family economic security.

Policy

Clients may continue to be eligible for County Assistance Office (CAO)-issued special allowances (SPAL). The EARN/Work Ready provider may assist clients in completing and submitting the [SPAL Request Form \(PA 1883\)](#), along with any supporting documentation, to the CAO.

Under the following circumstances, the participant may be eligible for supportive services through their Partner4Work-funded program:

- The CAO deems the participant ineligible for CAO-issued SPAL due to cash closure for employment
- The participant SPAL account is depleted

The service or item must:

- Be required for participation in work or an approved activity;
- Be the least costly and most practical item or service that will meet the need;
- Not be available from another source or at no cost to the client;
- Not be already owned by or previously paid for by participant; and
- Be non-recurring.

Each participant should be given individualized case management services and plan development in order to eliminate possible dependency on supportive services. Supportive services awards should be based on individual participant needs and plan development. This information should be properly documented in the Individual Employment Plan (IEP) and case notes in the Commonwealth Workforce Development System (CWDS). Supportive services may only be awarded when necessary to enable participation in authorized employment and training activities. P4W funds must be used in accordance with the requirements of all guidance and regulations applicable to the funding source.

Justification for and receipt of supportive service delivery must be documented in the participant case file. This includes:

- A case note identifying the participant barrier for which the supportive service is sought
- A copy of the rejected SPAL Request Form, if applicable
- Receipt of the service delivered with corresponding case note

Partner4Work EARN & Work Ready Supportive Services Availability:

As noted above, participants may continue to qualify for CAO-issued SPALs to cover the item or service necessary for participation; providers are directed to utilize these first. If the outlined criteria are met, Partner4Work will provide funding to EARN and Work Ready participants for supportive services including, but not limited to, the categories listed below. EARN and Work Ready provider staff will determine the need for supportive services and monitor the customer's progress and status to assess ongoing need.

- 1. Transportation;** Transportation supports are currently offered through Travelers Aid.
- 2. Clothing and/or uniform:** An EARN/Work Ready participant may receive up to \$150 annually to purchase clothing and/or a uniform(s) necessary for participation in training or employment if these items are not provided by the training provider or employer.
 - a. NOTE: A referral to the local PA WORKWEAR (PAWW) provider is the first resource for clothing. All TANF clients are eligible for a referral to PAWW if they express a need for clothing to work or for a work-related activity. Supportive service dollars should only be authorized in non-PA WORKWEAR areas or when PA WORKWEAR cannot provide the required item.
- 3. Vehicle Purchase:** A participant may receive up to \$1500 in a lifetime to purchase one vehicle under the following conditions:
 - a. Verification is provided that public transportation is not available or proves impractical as a means to travel to your place of employment or training program;
 - b. All requirements are met under the CAO Special Allowance Verification Packet Checklist- Auto Purchase.
- 4. Work, Education, and Training:** An EARN/Work Ready participant may qualify to receive supportive service funds to cover certain work, education, and/or training costs including:
 - a. Tools/Equipment/Electronic Device*

- i. Payment for equipment and tools must not be available from the employer or training provider, federal, state or other educational grants or public sources
 - ii. NOTE: Electronic devices are only available for approved educational and training activities.
- b. Books/Supplies
 - i. Direct payment for books and supplies must not be available from federal, state or other educational grants or public sources.
- c. Child Care Fees
 - i. Participants may receive support for child care expenses when necessary for participation in services. To qualify, participants must first apply for support through the Pennsylvania Department of Humans Services (DHS) subsidized child care program. Supportive service funds may be used to cover the participant's share of the child care cost when participating in this subsidized child care program, including child care costs incurred if placed on the waitlist for the program. If the chosen child care provider charges additional fees beyond the subsidy, the parent would need to provide verification to their program officer for approval.
- d. Union Dues/Professional Fees
 - i. An EARN/Work Ready participant applying to a union and/or registered apprenticeship may receive assistance for non-employer paid, non-refundable costs required for initial admittance or participation in the program. These costs may include application fees and initial dues (one month only).
- e. Non-employer paid licensing/certification or educational testing fees
 - i. A participant may receive funding for a maximum of two (2) instances of the same license/certification or test utilizing supportive services dollars. Program staff will determine the need for licensing or testing through employer demand. The staff will make the necessary arrangements with the vendor for payment. The cost of GED testing and/or obtaining GED transcripts may be covered under this supportive services category.
- f. Drug Testing and/or TB Testing
 - i. An EARN/Work Ready participant may have drug tests and/or TB tests paid for through supportive services dollars.

Policy Exceptions:

Under limited circumstances, Partner4Work may grant exceptions to requirements within this policy. Requests for exceptions may be submitted using the [Policy Exception Form](#), also available at www.partner4work.org.

Exception requests will be reviewed based on their allowability under any applicable legislation, regulation, and policy. Partner4Work will also consider funding availability, how an exception will lead to improved outcomes for the customer(s) being served, and other relevant factors.

Effective Date: December 15, 2023

Last Reviewed: May 1, 2026

Policy Updates

Date	Update
02/18/2026	The Policy Exceptions subsection has been updated to direct users to the new request form.
07/01/2026	- Language was added to clarify that, to deliver Partner4Work-funded supportive services, SPAL ineligibility must be due to cash closure for employment. "Time-sensitive cases" and "need based assistance" have been removed as criteria to deliver Partner4Work-funded supportive services. - The subsection addressing availability was revised to clarify that SPALS are to be utilized before Partner4Work-funded supportive services.