

Chapter 303

MAINTENANCE

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Section I. Definitions

- A. **“Extreme medical risk”** means a probability of substantially increasing functional impairment or death if medical services, including mental health services, are not provided expeditiously.
- B. **“Maintenance”** means monetary support provided to an eligible individual or an individual receiving extended evaluation services for those expenses such as food, shelter, and clothing **that are in excess of the normal living expenses of the individual and that are necessitated by the individual's participation in a program of vocational rehabilitation services.**

Section II. General Policy

- A. Prior to providing maintenance services, the Division shall determine whether comparable services and benefits exist under any other program and whether those services and benefits are available to the person. Such determination, however, shall not be required:
1. If it would delay the provision of such services to any person at extreme medical risk; or
 2. An immediate job placement would be lost due to a delay in the provision of such comparable benefits.
- B. The Division, with the input of the State Rehabilitation Council, shall establish and maintain reasonable spending guidelines and standards for exception to them which shall be reviewed at least annually. The Division Director may

adjust them accordingly.

Section III. Spending Guidelines

A. Comparable Services and Benefits

Comparable services and benefits, such as Food Stamps and General Assistance, must always be used as applicable although prudence may be exercised. (For example, if waiting to see if a person is eligible for "Section 8 Housing" in a new community may postpone accepting a job offer, a month's rent and a rent deposit may be provided.)

Please note that public benefits such as Social Security Disability Insurance, Supplemental Security Income, and Temporary Aid to Needy Families exist to assure that funds for food and shelter are available for certain people who need them; provision of maintenance via VR funds is not intended to duplicate the intent of public benefits and is only for costs in excess of the normal expenses of the person that are necessitated by the person's participation in a program of vocational rehabilitation services. The case record must show how the provision of maintenance is related to the person's participation in his/her program of vocational rehabilitation services.

B. Room, Meals, and Housing Expenses

1. If a school or facility does not offer a room and/or meals arrangement, reasonable room and meals costs may be provided consistent with costs in the locality.
2. Housing deposits, such as one-time costs of utilities and rent, may be provided. A month's rent (or mortgage payment, if applicable) may also be provided. Provision of housing expenses must be limited to situations in which the person must relocate or would otherwise be precluded from participating in an IPE or taking a job.

GUIDANCE: A deposit should not exceed \$750.

Rent (or mortgage) also should not exceed \$750.

Note on deposits: So that a deposit may be refunded to the Division rather than to the person at the end of a specific time period or event, the Counselor must have a written agreement with the person that the money be returned to the Division.

3. Short-term room and/or meal costs (normally reserved for travel necessitating overnights in a motel) may be provided. Room rates must be reasonable.

GUIDANCE: Cost of a motel room should not exceed \$100/night for one person or \$125/night for two persons.

4. Meal costs should not exceed the State of Vermont meal allowance for employees unless there are extenuating circumstances.

C. Clothing

A person in a rehabilitation program may require clothing suitable for participating in the program. Clothing needs should be assessed and may be provided when:

1. The person is at a facility which requires special clothing or uniforms either by dress code or by weather;
2. Special safety clothing (such as steel-toed work boots) is needed to begin a job and is not provided by the employer;
3. The person is ready for employment and needs clothing for job interviews or to begin a job.

GUIDANCE: The cost should not exceed \$300 for all clothing needs. The person shall be encouraged to comparison-shop to get the best price for the clothing items which will meet his/her vocational needs. Clothing should be comparable in quality to that worn by co-workers.

D. Provision of Other Subsistence Needs

The Division may furnish an allowance of up to \$50/week for personal items or as an incentive for participating in an activity such as an unpaid job tryout.

E. Standards for Exceptions to Spending Guidelines

Exceptions to the spending guidelines established by the Division for this policy may be made if justified in the record of service in accordance with the following criteria:

1. Rooms/meals if:
 - a. The person's disability mandates a special housing consideration or special diet; and
 - b. No other less expensive and reasonable alternatives exist in the locality.
2. Clothing if:
 - a. Out-of-ordinary clothing is required by the disability or physical size; or
 - b. Out-of-ordinary clothing is required by the employer or program (e.g., tuxedo which the rest of the waiters in a restaurant are also required to wear); and
 - c. The person does not already possess a basic wardrobe suitable to complete the vocational rehabilitation objective.
3. Other spending and duration guidelines in this policy if:
 - a. Vocational rehabilitation objectives could not otherwise be accomplished; and
 - b. The person's own resources have been used to the maximum extent possible.