



Community Justice Project  
118 Locust Street, Harrisburg, PA 17101

## **SNAP Only: How to Get Child Care and Other Supportive Services When Your Family Gets SNAP, But Not Cash Assistance**

(July 2013)

Families that get SNAP (food stamps), but not cash assistance ("SNAP-only" households) can get many of same special allowances for supportive services (SPALs) to attend school or job skills training that cash assistance families get.

Here is what you should say to your caseworker to get these services:

- My family is a "SNAP-only household."
- I would like an appointment to enroll as a volunteer in the SNAP "Employment and Training Program," so that I can go to school (or attend a job training program).
- I understand that I must enter into an "Employment Development Plan" (EDP). Please list my school, job training (or job search) on my EDP as my employment and training activity.
- I need supportive services (name the services needed) in order to follow my approved plan. (The welfare office must make a decision on your request for supportive services no later than 15 days following the date of your request.)

**NOTE:** The welfare office may deny SPALs (supportive services) to SNAP-only parents if they started an education program and paid **any** school-related expense (such as child care, transportation or books) before getting this activity approved on an EDP.

- If you are a SNAP-only parent and are thinking about starting an education or training program, you should contact the welfare office and get this activity approved on an EDP **BEFORE** you pay any of your school-related expenses.
- If you have already started your education, you can get SPALs as long as you have not yet paid any school-related expenses on your own and you get this activity approved on an EDP. (See, Policy Clarification on reverse side.)
- If you have been denied SPALs because you paid a school-related expense on your own, you should get your education or training program approved on an EDP right away so that you can get SPALs for the next semester. (See, Policy Clarification on reverse side)

For more information or questions, contact the Community Justice Project at:  
(800) 322-7572, ext.210, or [pzurflieh@palegalaid.net](mailto:pzurflieh@palegalaid.net)

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Deputy's Corner/ CAO Focus/ TANF R/ Customer Service Center/Modern Office/LIHEAP-eCIS/Phase IV-B/LEP

## **Policy Clarifications - Employment & Training - Policy/Procedure ESA16652535**

**Submitted:05/13**

**Agency: CAOs**

**TR No. 16652**

**Citations:**

**Subject: SPAL eligibility for self-initiated SNAP recipients**

Can you provide clarification of SNAP recipients' eligibility for SPALs for education expenses when they have self-initiated into education? How often should their eligibility be evaluated?

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**Response By: Barbara Deppen**

**Date:05/13**

Per EPP-676-135 and EPP-16504-535: If a SNAP client's self-initiated activity is otherwise approvable and the SPAL expenses are not being paid, then it may be approved and SPALs issued even though the activity began prior to signing the EDP. If the expenses have already been paid, the SNAP-only client is not eligible to have the self-initiated activity approved on the EDP and it should not be supported with SPALs.

Remember: SPALs cannot be issued to reimburse the client for items or services that have already been paid for or obtained. The CAO makes the determination of whether the SNAP E&T activity should be approved and SPALs authorized.

A self-initiated student's need for supportive services (SPALs) should be evaluated each semester/term.

**DESK GUIDE: SPECIAL ALLOWANCES FOR EMPLOYMENT and TRAINING** (Revised 05/07/2012)

<p><b>Who is eligible to receive a SPAL?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individuals participating in approved Cash or SNAP activities including education and training</li> </ul>
<p><b>How do individuals know about SPALs?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The CAO is responsible to inform individuals of the availability of special allowances (SPALs)</li> </ul>
<p><b>What is the timeframe for issuing SPALs?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SPALs are issued in advance of the need for the service or item to enable participation in an approved employment and training activity</li> <li>• When verification is received within five calendar days, payment is authorized no later than ten days after the date of request</li> <li>• When verification is received after five calendar days, payment is authorized no later than five calendar days after the receipt of verification</li> <li>• A notice of the decision must be sent within 15 days of an individual's request for the SPAL</li> </ul>
<p><b>When is an individual eligible for SPALs?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• After the individual has agreed to participate in an allowable E&amp;T activity approved on the individual's current <b>PA 1661 Agreement of Mutual Responsibility (AMR)</b> or <b>PA 1531 Employment Development Plan (EDP)</b></li> <li>• The item or service is <u>required</u> to support participation in work or an approved activity</li> <li>• The item or service is not available from another source at no cost to the individual</li> <li>• The individual does not already have the item</li> <li>• The item or service has not already been paid for or obtained</li> <li>• Participation is not possible without the item or service</li> </ul>
<p><b>How does the CAO know that the SPAL is required?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use the <u>SPAL Verification Form (PA 1883)</u></li> <li>• The individual may provide other verification</li> <li>• The CAO may make collateral contact</li> </ul>
<p><b>How does the CAO know the amount to issue for the SPAL?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The individual must provide an estimate for the cost of the requested items</li> <li>• The amount of the SPAL cannot be greater than the maximum limit allowed</li> <li>• It is determined to be the <b>Least Costly and Most Practical</b> item or service that will meet the need</li> </ul>

**DESK GUIDE: SPECIAL ALLOWANCES for EMPLOYMENT and TRAINING (Revised 05/07/2012)**

<p><b>How does the CAO know if the SPAL was used for the intended purpose?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The recipient of a SPAL must provide an original receipt showing that it was used for its intended purpose within 14 days of receiving the benefit.</li> </ul>
<p><b>When is an O/P filed?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When no receipt is provided</li> <li>• When the SPAL is not used for its intended purpose</li> <li>• If the individual does not participate in the approved activity for the amount of time the SPAL was intended to cover</li> <li>• The difference between the amount issued and the amount spent is \$10 or more</li> </ul>
<p><b>Is the SPAL documented in any other way?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Narrate when issuing a SPAL. See CAH 135.64</li> <li>• Maintain documentation in the case record scanning the information</li> </ul>

**DESK GUIDE: SPECIAL ALLOWANCES FOR EMPLOYMENT and TRAINING** (Revised 05/07/2012)

Types of Allowances	Subcategory	Reason Codes	Reason Codes WORKING TANF	TANF Frequency	SNAP Frequency	Maximum Allowance
Transportation	Bus (May include Subway, Commuter Rail and Para transit)	268	868	As required for job interviews, approved activities or for employment. May be authorized for the period up to the date of the first pay.	As required for job interviews, or approved activities or to accept employment. May be authorized for the period up to the start date.	\$1,500 annually (7/1-6/30)
	Taxi	272	872			
	Mileage (Includes parking and tolls if required)	250	850	As required for job interviews, approved activities or for employment. May be authorized for the period up to the date of the first pay. Reimbursed at \$0.20 per mile.	As required for job interviews or approved activities or to accept employment. May be authorized for the period up to the start date.	
	Car / Van Pool	267	867	As required for job interviews, approved activities or for employment. May be authorized for the period up to the date of the first pay.	As required for job interviews or approved activities or to accept employment. May be authorized for the period up to the start date.	
	Motor Vehicle Repair	262	862	As required for work or approved activities	As required for approved activities or if required to accept employment. May be authorized for the period up to the start date.	
	Motor Vehicle Expenses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ driver's license</li> <li>✓ state inspection fee</li> <li>✓ emission control inspection fee</li> <li>✓ license plates</li> <li>✓ vehicle registration fee</li> </ul>	260	860	As required for work or approved activities	NOT ALLOWABLE	
	Moving / Relocation	244	844	Issued to accept a verified offer of gainful, permanent employment. Maximum \$200.00 annually.	NOT ALLOWABLE	
	Clothing for Employment / Training	256	856	As required for work or approved activities	As required for approved activities or if required to accept employment. May be	

**DESK GUIDE: SPECIAL ALLOWANCES for EMPLOYMENT and TRAINING** (Revised 05/07/2012)

					authorized for the periods up to the start date	
Vehicle Purchase	Vehicle Purchase	261	861	As required for work or approved activities	NOT ALLOWABLE	One vehicle up to \$1,500 in a Lifetime
Work, Education and Training	Tools / Equipment	257	857	As required for work or approved activities	As required for approved activities or if required to accept employment. May be authorized for the period up to the start date. <b>PERSONAL COMPUTERS ARE NOT ALLOWABLE.</b>	\$1,000 in a lifetime
	Books / Supplies	278	878	As required for work or approved activities	As required for approved activities or if required to accept employment. May be authorized for the period up to the start date	
	Fees	264	864	As required for work or approved activities	As required for approved activities or if required to accept employment. May be authorized for the period up to the start date	
	Union Dues / Professional Fees	258	858	May be authorized for the period up to date of first pay	NOT ALLOWABLE	



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## ***Tips for Navigating the TANF Work Requirements***

(April 2015)

DPW's TANF work program (known as "RESET") takes a strong "work first" approach. Therefore, DPW's emphasis is on finding jobs for clients as soon as possible, even when the client lacks the education, skills, or work experience to get a job at a family sustaining wage. Since this approach tends to lead to low-wage employment, it is, generally, not very successful in getting families out of poverty. Our approach is to help clients make their **own** choices about what activities to pursue, so that they have a better shot at achieving true self-sufficiency. Our approach requires a lot of advocacy in each individual case, but has much better outcomes.

There are several principles to keep in mind as you help guide clients through the complicated welfare work requirements:

- The welfare office does not always inform clients of and offer them a full range of activities — including education and training — from which they may choose to meet their work requirement;
- The welfare office does not always talk through all of the possible exemptions and reasons for good cause with clients;
- The welfare office often wrongly issues a sanction or closes a case as a result of miscommunication or misunderstanding;

For these reasons, it is very important that advocates take the time to carefully explore with all TANF clients:

- What the client most wants to do, long-term, and the short-term steps towards that goal ;
- The full range of activities -- including education, job skills training, ESL, GED, and literacy — from which the client may be able to choose, as well as special programs, like KEYS (for parents who wish to attend community college) , which the welfare office may not have told the client about.
- Whether the client needs and wants to claim an exemption or good cause to be excused from the work requirements;
- Whether a client who is eligible for an exemption or good cause wants to volunteer for an activity (like education or job training), to the extent she is currently able to do so;
- The importance of frequently communicating with the welfare office and with any work program contractors to prevent inappropriate sanctions or case closures; and
- The importance of immediately appealing if the welfare office issues a sanction, terminates benefits, denies a supportive service, or won't let the client pursue the activity of her choosing.

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