

## BLOCK FUNDING

**Policy no.: 3.26**

**Effective Date:** February 1, 2013

**Dates Revised:** August 18, 2014; May 21, 2015; February 6, 2017; March 28, 2018

**Policy Cross References:** Financial Services for the Child or Youth; Basic Foster Care Rate; Level Fee; Respite; Child Care, Babysitting and Sleepovers; Placement Procedures; Vacation Costs for the Child or Youth In Care or Custody to Accompany the Foster Family on Vacation; Transitioning to Youth Services from the In Care Program

**Legislative References:**

**PURPOSE:** To outline the financial services that are included in the block funding provided to foster parents on behalf of a child or youth placed in a foster home.

**POLICY:**

1. Level 1 and Level 2 foster parents who receive the basic foster care rate for a child or youth residing in their home shall be provided with block funding in the amount of \$300 per month for each child or youth placed in the foster home to cover social/recreational costs, local transportation costs and the equivalent of one weekend of respite per month for the child or youth.
2. Level 3 specialized foster parents who received the basic foster care rate for a child or youth residing in their home shall be provided with block funding in the amount of \$535 per month for each child or youth placed in the foster home to cover social/recreational costs, local transportation costs and the equivalent of two weekends of respite per month for the child or youth.
3. Existing foster parents that opted to remain with receipt/invoice based reimbursement and not accept block funding when it was introduced in February 2013 may choose to switch to block funding at any time, however, once a foster parent(s) accepts block funding for a child or youth placed in the home, they cannot return to receipt/invoice based reimbursement.
4. The cost of supports and services associated with the care of a child or youth that are not included in the basic foster care rate or block funding (e.g. tutoring, child care, etc.) shall be assessed on an individual basis in accordance with the applicable policy (e.g. *Financial Services for the Child or Youth; Child Care, Babysitting and Sleepovers;* etc.).
5. The social worker shall determine through discussion with the foster parent(s) and the child or youth, where age and developmentally appropriate, how the block funding money is being used when considering any requests for additional funding or when assessing the services being provided to the child or youth (e.g. the types of social recreational activities the child or youth is involved in, etc.).

6. All financial requests and approvals shall be completed and approved on the Financial Benefit Request (FBR) with the approval noted in the case file.
7. Financial requests approved as exceptions to block funding shall be approved to a maximum of a 6 month period at which time reassessment is required to determine if the service or benefit is still required.

## **PROCEDURES:**

1. Block funding is standardized upfront funding paid to level 1, 2 and 3 foster parents to supplement the basic foster care rate.
2. Level 1 & 2 foster parents will receive \$300 block funding per month and this includes monies to cover the cost of social/recreational activities/items, local transportation and the equivalent of 1 weekend of respite per month for each child or youth placed in the home.
3. Level 3 specialized foster parents will receive \$535.00 per month and this includes monies to cover the cost of social/recreational activities/items, local transportation and the equivalent of 2 weekends of respite per month for each child or youth placed in the home.
4. Block funding gives level 1, 2 and 3 foster parents the flexibility to manage funding in a way that best meets the social/recreational, transportation and their respite needs and the respite needs of the child or youth. A social worker shall approve block funding for a foster parent(s) upon placement of each child or youth in the home for whom the foster parent will receive the basic foster care rate. Please refer to the ***Basic Foster Care Rate*** policy for additional information. Foster parents are not expected to provide receipts for expenses paid for with block funding.

### **Social / Recreational Expenditures**

5. All social/recreational costs for a child or youth are included in the basic foster care rate and block funding. A social worker shall use the following examples when discussing with a foster parent what is included in the basic foster care rate and block funding:
  - a) fees for lessons and programming (e.g. swimming, art, music, etc.);
  - b) uniforms and costumes;
  - c) tickets for social/recreational concerts/shows;
  - d) trips for social/recreational activities;
  - e) sports equipment (e.g. skates, bicycles, helmets, etc.);
  - f) family activities and outings;
  - g) day or weekend trips;
  - h) treats (e.g. going to a restaurant/movie with friends, etc.); and
  - i) educational toys and home exercise equipment (e.g. infant play mat, exersaucer, weights, books, arts/crafts, etc.).
6. Where a child or youth has been enrolled in a social/recreational activity prior to entering care, a social worker shall discuss with the foster parent(s) the importance of supporting the child or youth in continuing in the activity, if possible. If it is determined that the foster parent cannot support the cost of an exceptionally expensive activity with the funding

allocated in block funding and the basic foster care rate, and the child or youth's parent(s) are not already contributing financially to the child or youth's care, a social worker shall explore the ability of the child or youth's parent(s) to financially contribute to the cost for the child or youth continuing in the activity.

7. If determined that the foster parent or the parent of the child is unable to cover the cost of an expensive activity, a manager may approve additional funding to enable the child or youth to continue in an activity that they were actively involved in **prior to coming into care** if assessed to be in the child or youth's best interest.
8. A supervisor may approve up to a maximum of \$200 per week to cover the cost of a social/recreational program, which replaces child care and is required by a foster parent(s) for employment or educational training purposes (e.g. a summer camp program that replaces child care required by a foster parent(s) to accommodate their employment or enrollment in post-secondary training, etc.).
9. The cost of an in-province school related trip may be approved by a supervisor for a child or youth to travel with their class or a school group/team of which the child or youth is a member. The ability of the foster parent(s) to pay for the trip with block funding shall be taken into consideration by determining the cost of the school related trip and how the foster parent is already utilizing block funding for social/recreational expenses.

### **Transportation and Meals**

10. A social worker shall explain to foster parents when discussing block funding and reimbursement of transportation costs that foster parents are required to plan, using the block funding they receive, to cover all regular/local transportation expenses, including transportation for typical medical transportation and the purchase of bus passes.
11. A foster parent who is receiving block funding shall not be reimbursed for routine community and local travel for a child or youth, including transportation by the foster parent directly, taxi or bus, as funding for these costs are included in the basic foster care rate and block funding.
12. Transportation costs not included as local or community transportation in block funding that may be approved by a supervisor include:
  - a) travel to and from court, regardless of the distance travelled;
  - b) placement travel over 100 kms;
  - c) transportation for family access visits or for respite that is required due to a child or youth travelling to another community for family visiting or reunification purposes (e.g. a child or youth must travel to and stay overnight in another community for family visiting or to facilitate a reunification plan);
  - d) excessive school transportation that is based on the reason, frequency and distance travelled (e.g. school transportation if the plan for the child or youth is to remain in his or her neighborhood school and as a result the child or youth must be transported daily outside the school zone where the foster parent resides, and the school is not close in proximity or en route to the workplace of the foster parent(s)). Please note that children or youth with physical or cognitive disabilities, or who live outside of a bus zone and not in walking distance of the school, who

require special transportation may qualify for assistance from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. Social workers shall consult with the school district regarding services for these children and youth prior to requesting approval for these transportation costs;

- e) excessive child care transportation that is based on the reason, frequency and distance travelled (e.g. child care transportation may be approved when a foster parent requires child care for employment reasons and the child care provider is not located in close proximity or en route to the workplace of the foster parent(s);
- f) exceptions for non-typical in-province medical travel shall be assessed on an individual basis considering the reason (e.g. diagnosis of a medical condition that requires above average medical attention, specialist appointment, etc.); above average frequency (e.g. more than 4 trips a month, etc.); and above average distance travelled (e.g. more than 50 kilometers once per week, more than 100 kilometers per trip, etc.) for a specific situation;

For example, it would be an exceptional medical travel if a foster parent has to travel across the province for a child or youth to attend a specialist appointment or if a foster parent has to travel twice a week, every week, more than 50 kilometers each way for a child or youth to attend a medical appointment. It would not be considered exceptional medical travel if a foster parent had to only travel several times a year from 50-100 kilometers each way from one community to another community as this would be regular medical travel.

- 13. The cost of out of province (OPP) travel is not included in block funding. All requests for out of province travel (excluding school related trips as noted in the exceptions below and family visiting travel for children and youth placed in an OPP) shall be approved by the ADM or Deputy Minister.
- 14. A social worker shall assess whether foster parents in receipt of block funding should be expected to cover all or a portion of a respite provider's transportation costs. A manager may approve transportation costs for respite, to a maximum of 250 kms per week, if deemed necessary based on distance and frequency, and if required to meet the needs of the child or youth. Mileage shall be reimbursed at the established fluctuating basic Provincial Government rate.
- 15. Where transportation costs are approved as an exception to block funding and the foster parent(s) uses their own vehicle, they shall be reimbursed for mileage at the established fluctuating basic Provincial Government rate. A social worker shall explain to foster parents that they are required to track mileage only for specific trips that have been approved as exceptions to block funding, and are to only submit travel claims for transportation costs that have been pre-approved for reimbursement.
- 16. When approval has been granted for exceptional transportation costs to be paid outside of block funding, the cost of meals and/or a hotel stay shall be assessed on a case by case basis and may be approved by a supervisor.
- 17. The following shall be considered when assessing requests to cover the cost of meals for a foster parent(s) and a child or youth travelling outside of their local area:
  - a) purpose of travel;

- b) frequency of travel;
  - c) appointment time and location;
  - d) departure time;
  - e) return time; and
  - f) number of people required to travel.
18. The cost of meals for a child or youth may be approved by a social worker when a child or youth has to travel outside the local area and travel costs are approved outside of block funding. Where a foster parent(s) is approved to be reimbursed for a child or youth's meals, the following are the maximum allowable per diem rates:

| <b>Age</b>    | <b>Rate</b>  |
|---------------|--------------|
| 0 – 12 years  | \$15 per day |
| 12 – 18 years | \$20 per day |

19. The cost of meals for a foster parent(s) may be approved by a supervisor when the foster parent(s) is required to travel with a child or youth outside the local area and travel costs are approved. Where a foster parent is approved to be reimbursed for meals, reimbursement shall be provided in accordance with the established Provincial Government per diem rate.

**Respite**

20. When discussing respite with Level 1 and 2 foster parents, a social worker shall explain that block funding includes monies for the equivalent of one respite weekend per month. Foster parents may use their discretion on how to best meet their respite needs using the funding provided. This may include utilizing one weekend of respite per month, hourly respite, a combination of overnight/hourly respite or saving funding for several months to take a longer period of respite. When using money from block funding for hourly respite, foster parents are required to cover the cost of employee benefits and any associated payroll administration fee for those hours.
21. When discussing respite with Level 3 foster parents, a social worker shall explain that block funding includes monies for the equivalent of two respite weekends per month. This may include utilizing two weekends of respite per month, hourly respite, a combination of overnight/hourly respite or saving funding for several months to take a longer period of respite. When using money from block funding for hourly respite, foster parents are required to cover the cost of employer benefits and any associated payroll administration fee for those hours.
22. If a foster parent requests respite in addition to what is allocated in block funding, the social worker shall determine through discussion with the foster parent(s) whether they are utilizing the money allotted for respite in block funding before considering or recommending any additional respite funding for the foster family.
23. Foster parents are expected to use the block funding money provided for respite prior to any additional respite being approved, unless the additional respite is requested to enable the foster parent(s) to travel outside their home region to attend training related to

fostering, employment or attend a medical appointment/event to meet the needs of another child or youth in care, or to accommodate a child or youth staying with a respite provider outside the local area or the foster home for the purpose of family visiting or reunification. Please refer to the *Respite* policy for additional information.

24. In situations where the foster parent is considered the employer for a service not covered under block-funding, (e.g. child care, babysitting, tutoring or hourly respite approved in addition to block funding), the cost of associated employer benefits and/or payroll administration fees shall be approved by the individual approving the original request (e.g. if a supervisor has the authority to approve child care hours he or she would also approve the associated employer benefits and administration fees).

### **EXCEPTIONS:**

1. Existing foster parents as of January 1, 2013 were given an option of whether to accept block funding or to continue with receipt/invoice based reimbursement for a child or youth placed in their home as of that date. Foster parents who elected to remain with receipt/invoice based reimbursement for the expenses that would otherwise be included in block funding may continue with this option until the child or youth leaves their home. In these cases, requests for funding for social/recreation costs, transportation and weekend respite must be assessed **every 3 months** and be approved in accordance with the *Guidelines for Services to Foster Parents Not Receiving Block Funding*.
2. In exceptional circumstances, the zone manager may approve additional funding for social/recreational activities, local transportation, where it is assessed as necessary based on the needs of the child or youth and/or foster family.
3. In exceptional circumstances, the RD may approve additional hourly/overnight/weekend respite beyond the approval level of the zone manager where it is assessed as necessary based on the needs of the child or youth and/or foster family.
4. In exceptional circumstances, the zone manager may approve funding for an out of province or out of country school related trip where a child or youth's entire class or school group/team are travelling.
5. In exceptional and emergency situations (e.g. to avoid placement breakdown), a manager may approve transportation or additional respite if the RD or ADM is unavailable and the request cannot wait for approval due to the urgency of the situation.

### **RELEVANT DOCUMENTS:**

- *Foster Parent Agreement (Level 2)*
- *Foster Parent Agreement (Level 3)*