

**10-144**

**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICE**

**OFFICE FOR FAMILY INDEPENDENCE**

**Chapter 330: HIGHER OPPORTUNITY FOR PATHWAYS TO EMPLOYMENT  
(HOPE) PROGRAM RULES**

## **SECTION 4: SERVICES**

The type, amount, and frequency of services are individualized based on the unmet needs of the Participants.

### **A. Navigation Services**

Navigation services are offered to all Participants at no cost to the Participant and provided on a voluntary basis through a contracted Agent selected and secured by the Department. Navigation services are based on individual need and requested assistance to promote persistence and completion. While the Agent is providing Student Navigation as a support to assist Participants in advancing in their Training or Education pursuits, their service does not replace Department and Participant responsibility.

#### **(1) Student Navigation Contracted Agent**

The Agent will provide campus-based Navigation services to Participants. The Department's Agent will have access to Participant information necessary to contact and support Participants throughout their enrollment in HOPE. The Department's Agent will be bound by the same confidentiality standards as the Department. Agents of the Department providing Navigation services are responsible only for providing those services as outlined in the contract between the Agent and the Department. The Department's Agent is not responsible for—

- a) Determining Applicant or Participant eligibility; and
- b) Maintaining Participants' eligibility; and
- c) Requesting and approving Support Services; and
- d) Participant's use and receipt of Support Services; and
- e) Submitting documentation and verifications to the Department as required of the Participant; and
- f) Sending or communicating official Department notifications; and
- g) Determining Good Cause; and
- h) Meeting Participants at locations other than campus-based locations or other than those described in the contract.

### **B. Financial Supports**

The following financial supports will be available to the Participant based on unmet need when the supports are necessary to maintain uninterrupted participation in the approved program. When excluded income sources are actually used by process, choice, or law, to

pay for an otherwise reimbursable expense, the portion of the expense paid with excluded income is then considered to be met and is not subject to reimbursement.

### **(1) Tuition and Fees**

The Department will pay outstanding and current tuition and mandatory fees.

- a) **Outstanding tuition and fees.** There is a HOPE Program lifetime limit of one thousand five hundred dollars (\$1,500) per Participant for outstanding tuition and fees when it is required to access previously earned credits. Outstanding tuition and fees does not apply to student loan balances and payments, or prior payments made to payment plans entered into before HOPE enrollment.
- b) **Current Tuition and Fees.** There is a HOPE Program annual limit of six thousand dollars (\$6,000) per Participant for current tuition and mandatory fees.

Participants in the HOPE Program must remain in good financial standing with the institution providing the Training or Education Program.

### **(2) Child Care**

The HOPE Program will pay for suitable child care at a rate equal to or less than the child care Market Rate cap, as set by the Department's Office of Child and Family Services, when the service is necessary for the Participant to engage in Training or Education activities or a combination of Training or Education and employment activities. Required child care hours will include three (3) hours for study for each hour of instruction per week. These study hours do not have to be scheduled or supervised study hours; as long as the Participant is satisfactorily participating in the Training or Education activity, the study hours are automatically allowed. On a case-by-case basis, child care payment for children with special needs can exceed the child care Market Rate cap, as determined by the Department. The Department will authorize child care payments when:

- a) The Participant selects the child care provider; and
- b) The child care provider is licensed, or, an unlicensed provider approved by the Department; and
- c) The minor child(ren) is/are part of the Family Unit; and
- d) The minor child(ren) is/are under the age of thirteen (13) and requires care, or over the age of thirteen (13) and physically or mentally incapable of caring for themselves as certified by a medical or mental health source, or is under court supervision; and

- e) No other adult member in the Family Unit is available to take care of the child(ren) and the Participant is prevented from providing care and supervision of the child(ren) due to taking part in Training or Education activities or a combination of Training or Education and employment activities; and

**EXCEPTION:** Participants who complete their programs of studies will continue to receive ongoing child care supports through the end of the calendar month of program completion.

- f) The child care provider is not part of the Participant's Family Unit; and
- g) The authorization for payment does not exceed fifty (50) hours per week.
- h) During an academic vacation period longer than a calendar month, a Participant must be:
  - i. Matriculated for the next academic period following the vacation period and working at least part-time over the vacation period; or
  - ii. Matriculated and currently taking classes at least half-time over the vacation period.

### (3) Transportation

There is a HOPE Program weekly limit of one hundred forty dollars (\$140) for transportation necessary for Participants to engage in Training or Education activities or a combination of Training or Education and employment activities. This transportation includes travel to and from child care. Effective March 1, 2024, Mileage-mileage will be paid at a rate identified at <https://www.maine.gov/osc/travel/mileage-other-info> of \$0.45 per mile (\$0.46 effective October 1, 2022) for the most direct route up to the weekly limit. Participants using their own vehicles must have a valid Maine driver's license, an active vehicle registration, and valid, minimum of current liability insurance. Transportation supports will be provided for:

- a) The least expensive mode of transportation available to the Participant within their geographic area; or
- b) The cost of public transportation; or
- c) The cost of contracted route drivers or agencies if the Department determines this to be the least expensive option to meet the Participant's transportation needs; or
- d) Participants using carpool drivers who have a valid driver's license and are using a vehicle that is properly registered. Carpool drivers will be reimbursed according to the guidelines in (a) above, plus two dollars (\$2) per day per HOPE student transported (excluding the driver).

**(4) Books, Supplies, Tools, or Equipment**

There is a HOPE Program annual limit of two thousand dollars (\$2,000) per Participant for required books, supplies, tools, equipment, uniforms or similar Training or Education-related items. A Participant will be eligible for such support provided—

- a) The requested item(s) is/are mandatory for all students and required for the successful participation in their program; and
- b) The Participant provides an estimate for the required item(s) and a copy of the current financial aid award letter.

**(5) Technology and Software**

There is a HOPE Program lifetime limit of five hundred dollars (\$500) per Participant for the repair, upgrade to, or purchase of a computer or software necessary for completion of the Participant's Training or Education Program when it is demonstrated that there is no availability of sustained access to technology or software for use at the participant's home. Purchase of a computer can occur when evidence is provided that no computer owned or available to the Participant at their home is adequate to meet the requirements set forth by their program of study or can be repaired or upgraded to do so. Upon purchase, the item becomes property of the Participant and the responsibility to replace or repair the item- if stolen, damaged, or lost- is the Participant's. The Department will authorize payments for technology and software when—

- a) The Participant does not have reasonable home access to a computer or software adequate to meet their academic needs; and
- b) The Training or Education Program requires the computer or software for the successful participation in their program.

**(6) Internet Access**

There is a HOPE Program monthly limit of fifty dollars (\$50) per Participant for access to the Internet when:

- a) It is necessary for the Participant to engage in their Training or Education Program, and
- b) The Participant cannot access other available, cost-effective Internet resources.

**(7) Vehicle Inspections, Registrations, and Repairs**

There is a HOPE Program annual limit of one thousand dollars (\$1,000) per Participant for the inspection, registration and repair of a vehicle. These supports will

be issued for the vehicle used by the Participant, or their spouse, while engaged in approved Training or Education activities. The Department will authorize payments necessary for the safe and legal operation of the vehicle under the following conditions:

- a) The vehicle operator has a valid Maine driver's license; and
- b) The vehicle is registered to the Participant; and
- c) The vehicle has a minimum of current liability insurance.

#### **(8) Vehicle Insurance**

There is a HOPE Program annual limit of six hundred dollars (\$600) per Participant for the cost of the minimum liability insurance required by Maine law on the vehicle used by the Participant, or their spouse, while engaged in approved Training or Education activities. The vehicle operator must have a valid Maine driver's license and current vehicle registration.

In instances where drivers other than the Participant or their spouse are listed on the insurance declaration page, HOPE will only pay that portion of the liability premium which is attributable to the Participant and their spouse.

#### **(9) Corrective Eyewear**

There is a HOPE Program annual limit of two-hundred dollars (\$200) per Participant for the purchase of corrective eyewear when—

- a) It is necessary for the Participant to engage in their Training or Education Program; and
- b) The Participant requests prior approval from the Department with an estimate for the cost of the eyewear from the eyewear vendor; and
- c) Other insurance available to the Participant is used first; and
- d) The cost of the eyewear is of the least expensive, quality option to correct the deficiency.

#### **(10) Dental Care**

There is a HOPE Program lifetime limit of two thousand dollars (\$2,000) per Participant for dental care when—

- a) It is necessary for the Participant to engage in their Training or Education Program; and

- b) The Participant requests prior approval from the Department with an estimate from the dental provider verifying the cost and the need for the service prior to the work being performed; and
- c) The dental care is the least-expensive, quality service available to the Participant to correct the condition; and
- d) Other insurance available to the Participant is utilized first.

Cosmetic dental work such as veneers and whitening services are not covered.

**(11) Other Supports**

There is a HOPE Program annual limit of five hundred dollars (\$500) per Participant for other Support Services not previously described in this section that are directly related to Training or Education activities and are required to allow the Participant to continue their education without interruption. Eligible support services include—

- a) Professional licensing and credentialing fees not included in Tuition and Fees; or
- b) Requirements by the institution to matriculate; or
- c) Requirements by the institution to maintain matriculation and/or complete the Training or Education Program; or
- d) Unmet needs that present an immediate risk to maintaining matriculation or satisfactory progress.

HOPE will not cover services when—

- a) The cost for the service can be paid from another source; or
- b) The request is used to supplement any other HOPE support category; or
- c) The expense is related to the ordinary and necessary daily cost of living, such as: utilities, rent, mortgage, and food.