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NEW YORK STATE
OFFICE OF TEMPORARY AND DISABILITY ASSISTANCE
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David A. Hansell
Commissioner

Local Commissioners Memorandum

Section 1

Transmittal:	07-LCM-09
To:	Local District Commissioners
Issuing Division/Office:	Division of Employment and Transitional Supports
Date:	July 24, 2007
Subject:	Availability of Funds to Provide Services to Safety Net Assistance Recipients (SNAP – Safety Net Assistance Project)
Contact Person(s):	Edward Hennessy at (518) 473-0866
Attachments:	Attachment 1: Funding Level Maximums Attachment 2: Proposed Safety Net Assistance Project Submittal Form
Attachment Available On – Line:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Section 2

I. Purpose

The purpose of this Local Commissioner’s Memorandum (LCM) is to advise local districts that the recently enacted SFY 07-08 Budget provides \$765,000 in State funds for services and expenses related to innovative programs targeted to Safety Net Assistance Non-MOE recipients who are currently unable to obtain or retain employment due to mental and/or physical disability.

II. Background

One of the challenges facing local districts today is helping Safety Net Assistance clients with multiple barriers to self-sufficiency. In particular, the need exists for programs targeted to clients with mental and/or physical disabilities, whose situation may not be severe enough to qualify for SSI, yet who still have problems in achieving self-sufficiency. Recognizing this, the State Budget made funds available for additional services beyond the traditional employment services that are needed for these hard to place/serve individuals. Such funds were first made available in the SFY 00-01 budget; subsequent budgets also made funds available,

however, the appropriation language restricted funding to continuing programs that had been initially approved and implemented in 2001. **The SFY 07-08 budget appropriation language removed this restriction and thereby opens up the possibility of funding to all local districts with populations fewer than 2 million.**

The funding will be available for new and innovative programs that can serve as models for working with this difficult caseload and can be shared with other districts as best practices. Safety Net Assistance Projects (SNAP) that are currently funded are eligible for consideration but will be evaluated as new proposals. Maximum SNAP funding levels are established using the SNA Non-MOE caseload data reflecting the number of recipients who are currently coded as exempt from participating in work activities. Attachment 1 provides the local district funding maximums.

These funds are intended to provide districts additional resources to serve hard to place/serve recipients with significant barriers to obtaining long term independence. The following are examples of services which may be funded under this program:

- Assessment – Identification and assessment of those factors which may prevent the client from achieving long term independence including, but not limited to, learning disabilities, mental health issues, and physical disability.
- Consultative Medical Examinations – A potential resource for districts to send individuals for medical, psychological and intelligence evaluations to determine employability, work limitations, recommendations about treatment needs, or evaluate for potential SSI eligibility (see 06 LCM-13).
- Case Management Services – Case managers could develop client trust and multi-faceted strategies that will eventually lead some of this population to long term independence. Individuals will receive case management intended to move them to employment or on to federal disability benefits. Services may include case management focused on wellness plans intended to restore an individual to an “employable” status. Case management may also focus on assisting individuals through the federal disability application and/or appeals process.
- Remedial Programs for the Learning Disabled – Proposals may seek to identify learning challenged recipients, and partner with the local education and training community to develop appropriate remedial programs. These plans should work in concert with the district’s other efforts, such as VESID, to improve client and/or family functioning, thereby enhancing future steps to gain employment.
- Support Groups – Facilitated peer groups can be developed for a wide variety of issues, such as substance abuse, learning disabilities, or recipients’ fear of

change. The support groups' overriding goal should be to promote independence by taking incremental steps toward gainful employment.

- Home and Money Management – This could include a set of services designed to assist recipients in learning and/or improving basic home management skills, especially money management. Funds can also be used to develop support programs to counsel recipients on managing time and stress, balancing work and home commitments, and accepting new responsibilities.
- Contact and Home Visiting Programs – Development of frequent and large scale client contact programs that ensure that the self-improvement needs of the client are met and the self-sufficiency message is delivered repeatedly. These contacts could take place in individual or group settings, at or near clients' places of work – with permission of the employees and employers, at some other neutral safe location, or in the client's home.
- Benefits Counseling – A service designed to help recipients understand the positive impact which obtaining employment will have on their overall situation. Included could be such topics as blending available benefits with income from a paycheck in order to become self-sufficient. Emphasis could be placed on maximizing use of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), including the new non-custodial EITC, food stamps and the availability of transportation services.

We are seeking flexible, innovative and creative approaches to serving this population. Acceptable activities are not limited to the above listed examples. Plans must have key design points that encompass a combination of at least two of the following criteria: assessment and early identification of self-sufficiency barriers, building a trusting relationship, case management, incremental steps to employment, or pursuit of federal disability benefits.

Districts may also consider the establishment of Safety Net Assistance (SNA) plans for self-support to incorporate into their project (352.20(f), 92 ADM-37). These plans allow a district to disregard all or a portion of a Safety Net recipient's earned income and/or resources when the district determines that the disregard will lead to the removal of the recipient from the Safety Net Assistance caseload in a reasonable length of time. The SNA plan of self-support exemption is limited to a year.

III. Program Implications

A. Evaluation Criteria

This will be a competitive grant process because the limited amount of funding available for this project makes it simply impossible to fund all proposals without diluting the potential for results. A review team, consisting of staff from the Division of Employment and Transitional Supports and from Budget, Finance and

Data Management, will evaluate and rate all plans submitted within the established timeframe. As such, the review team will rank the received proposals. Proposals will be assessed and ranked according to the following criteria:

1. the ability to identify and assess the target population(s);
2. the number of people to be served;
3. demonstrating an understanding of various problems and barriers faced by the targeted population;
4. explanation of the service model(s) to be used, and how the model(s) will help recipients achieve long term independence;
5. a description of the outcomes anticipated from the program, and performance measures that will be used to evaluate those outcomes; and
6. if applicable, a description of how the proposed program would augment district programs made available through employment initiatives funded by this Office's Welfare to Work programs.

B. Funding

There is \$765,000 in State Funds (SFY 07-08) available to fund projects. Local districts are not required to provide a local match for these funds. Districts with populations less than two million are eligible to apply and may request funding according to the categories as shown on Attachment 1.

Approved projects are expected to begin on or before January 1, 2008 and operate for one year. However, availability of unspent funds after June 30, 2008 is contingent upon re-appropriation in the SFY 08-09 State Budget. Funding beyond this initial period is subject to re-appropriation/appropriation in the State Budget. Detailed claiming instructions will be provided once projects are approved.

C. TRACS

The SNAP program will utilize the TRACS system for claiming and reporting on SNAP. Reporting quarterly outcomes, as well as monthly numbers served, will be required. The SNAP performance measures are:

- Ratio of project participants obtaining employment;
- Ratio of project participants who complete training or educational services;
- Ratio of project participants receiving a reduced cash benefit or case closing due to increased earnings; and

- Ratio of project participants referred to and receiving federal disability benefits (SSA, SSI and/or Veteran's benefits).

Reporting periods are: January 1, 2008 – March 31, 2008; April 1, 2008 – June 30, 2008; July 1, 2008 – September 30, 2008; and, October 1, 2008 – December 31, 2008. Reports for the quarter are due the 15th of the month following the quarter.

D. Submission of Proposals

A local social services district may submit a proposal individually or may collaborate with another district(s) to submit a combined plan. All proposals must be submitted on the Proposed Safety Net Assistance Project Submittal Form which is Attachment 2 of this release. Plans must include the name and phone number of an individual that we may contact if any questions arise in the review process. Plans must be submitted to:

Dale J. Peterson
Director, Bureau of Transitional Programs
Division of Employment and Transitional Supports
40 North Pearl Street, (9-C)
Albany, NY 12243
Fax: 518-473-6207

Proposals must be received by close of business Friday, August 24, 2007, to be considered for funding. If you have any questions concerning this release, please contact Edward Hennessy at (518) 473-0866.

Issued By:

Name: Russell Sykes
Title: Deputy Commissioner
Division/Office: Division of Employment and Transitional Supports