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Local Commissioners Memorandum

Section 1

Transmittal:	08-LCM-12
To:	Local District Commissioners
Issuing Division/Office:	Center for Employment and Economic Supports/ Employment and Advancement Services Bureau
Date:	November 17, 2008
Subject:	Availability of Safety Net Assistance Project (SNAP) Funding
Contact Person(s):	Program Related Questions: Susanne Haag at (518) 486-6291 Fiscal Related Questions: Regions 1-4: James E. Carroll (800) 343-8859 ext. 4-7549 or 518-474-7549 or via e-mail at James.Carroll@otda.state.ny.us Region 5: Michael Borenstein (631) 854-9704 or via e-mail at Michael.Borenstein@otda.state.ny.us
Attachments:	Attachment 1: Funding Level Maximums Attachment 2: Proposed Safety Net Assistance Project Submittal Form
Attachments Available On – Line:	yes

Section 2

I. Purpose

The purpose of this Local Commissioners Memorandum (LCM) is to advise social services districts (districts) that the enacted State Fiscal Year (SFY) 08-09 Budget provides \$765,000 in State funds for services and expenses related to innovative programs targeted to Safety Net Assistance Non-Maintenance of Effort (Non-MOE) recipients (individuals who are receiving public assistance, but are ineligible for federally-funded programs) who are currently unable to obtain or retain employment due to a mental and/or physical disability. Projects funded under this initiative are referred to as Safety Net Assistance Projects (SNAP).

II. Background

One of the challenges facing districts is the ability to provide the intensive services necessary to enable Safety Net Assistance clients with multiple barriers to obtain and retain employment or, if appropriate, receive federal disability benefits. In particular, the

need exists for specialized services for clients with mental and/or physical disabilities, whose situation may not be severe enough to qualify for federal disability benefits, but who still have difficulty in obtaining and retaining employment. Recognizing this, the State Budget provides funds to support additional services for these individuals. Such funds were first made available in the SFY 00-01 budget; subsequent budgets also made funds available, however, the appropriation language restricted such funding to continuing projects that had been initially approved and implemented in 2001. In SFY 07-08, the budget appropriation language removed this restriction and thereby opened up the funding to all districts with a population less than 2 million. The SFY 08-09 budget appropriation language continues to designate that districts with a population of less than two million are eligible applicants for SNAP funding.

The SFY 08-09 funding will be available for existing as well as new and innovative projects that can serve as models for providing specialized services for the target population. All eligible districts, including districts with currently funded SNAP projects, are encouraged to submit proposals for consideration. All of the SFY 08-09 SNAP funds available will be awarded through the process described in this LCM. Therefore, districts with approved SNAP projects will need to submit a proposal for consideration to be eligible for SNAP funding beyond their current SNAP award. Maximum SNAP funding levels are established using the SNA Non-MOE caseload data reflecting the number of recipients who are coded as work-limited or exempt from participation in work activities. (Attachment 1 provides the local district funding maximums.)

These funds are intended to provide districts with additional resources to serve recipients with significant barriers to obtaining and retaining employment. The following are examples of services which may be funded under this project:

- Assessment – Identification and assessment of the participant’s strengths as well as factors which may prevent the client from achieving long-term economic independence including, but not limited to, learning disabilities, mental health issues, and physical disabilities.
- Specialized Medical or Vocational 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 eligibility for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) (see 06 LCM-13). Examinations funded under a SNAP grant should be specialty examinations or otherwise represent enhancements to the routine disability determination process.
- Case Management Services – Case managers would develop client trust and multi-faceted strategies that will eventually lead some of this population to long term independence. Individuals receive case management intended to help participants view employment as a desirable step, move individuals to employment or help individuals apply for and receive federal disability benefits. Services may include case management focused on wellness plans intended to restore an individual’s ability to work and counseling individuals on the benefits of work and availability of transitional and other benefits available to low-income workers including Earned Income Tax Credits. 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 would work in concert with other local services, including those provided through Vocational Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID), to improve client functioning, thereby enhancing future employment opportunities.
- 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 would be to promote independence by taking incremental steps toward gainful employment.
- Life Skills Services – This would include a set of services designed to assist recipients in learning and/or improving basic daily living skills, especially money management. Funds could also be used to develop support programs to counsel recipients on managing time and stress using public transportation, balancing work and home commitments, and accepting new responsibilities.
- Outreach and Home Visiting Programs – Development and implementation of program delivery strategies that take additional steps to connect with clients, such as meeting the client at his or her home. The overriding purpose of the outreach is to seek client buy-in to taking steps necessary to achieve economic independence and to establish and monitor client progress with a treatment/employment plan. Districts that intend to use these funds to support home visits should review the requirements outlined in 18 NYCRR 351.28 and 95 ADM 24 to ensure the process that is developed is consistent with State requirements. For example, home visits should generally be scheduled in advance.
- Specialized Job Placement and Retention Services – Projects that successfully prepare individuals to enter employment may also dedicate funds to developing employment opportunities that provide a highly supportive environment and/or to provide retention services such as a job coach.

We are seeking innovative and creative approaches to serving the Safety Net non-MOE population with barriers that limit their opportunities for employment. 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: comprehensive assessment and early identification of employment barriers, case management, incremental steps to employment, specialized job preparation services, specialized job placement and retention services, or pursuit of federal disability benefits.

Safety Net Assistance Plans of Self-Support

As part of the strategy to assist SNA Non-MOE recipients to successfully transition into the workforce, districts are encouraged to consider the establishment of Safety Net

Assistance (SNA) plans of self-support as a component of 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 improve the individual's ability to remain economically independent. For example, a SNA Plan of Self-Support could permit an eligible individual to deposit all or a portion of his/her earnings in a dedicated account for up to one year toward a goal of purchasing a car for transportation to and from work. This would allow for the accumulation of resources to help improve the individual's financial situation before all of the individual's earned income is used to determine eligibility for ongoing public assistance. The SNA plan of self-support exemption is limited to a year and must be authorized and approved by the local district.

III. Program Implications

A. Evaluation Criteria

This will be a highly competitive grant process due to the limited amount of funding available for this project. A review team consisting of OTDA staff will evaluate and rate all plans submitted within the established timeframe. In addition to cost effectiveness and overall fiscal appropriateness, 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 individuals to be served;
3. a demonstrated understanding of the various problems and barriers faced by the targeted population;
4. an explanation of the service model(s) to be used, and how the model(s) will help recipients achieve the goal of long-term employment or receive federal disability benefits. Preference will be given to projects with more specialized and intensive program strategies;
5. a detailed description of the outcomes anticipated from the project;
6. if applicable, a description of how the proposed project would augment existing district projects; and
7. if applicable, the claiming, monthly family served reporting, and quarterly outcome reporting history for past or currently funded SNAP projects. Districts that received SNAP funding through the SFY 2006-07 or SFY 2007-08 Budget that did not comply with reporting requirements or that achieved lower than expected expenditures and outcomes are asked to explain prior action, to immediately comply with reporting requirements to the extent possible, and to explain what steps have or will be taken to ensure that the proposed project meets required reporting timelines and/or outcome targets. The inability of the district to provide appropriate justification for prior activities and/or to identify how project spending,

reporting and/or outcomes will be improved will negatively affect the current proposal's score.

B. Funding

There is \$765,000 in State funds (SFY 08-09) available to fund projects. Districts are not required to provide a local match for these funds. Districts with a population of less than two million are eligible to apply and may request funding according to the categories shown on Attachment 1. An application for services for two or more districts should identify the approximate number of individuals to be served by district and may request an amount of funds of up to the combined award level limit for districts to be served.

It is the intent of OTDA to fund as many proposals as possible with the available funds without diluting the potential for results. As such, OTDA reserves the right to fund proposals for less than the requested amount and may also shift funds between funding levels to accommodate the funding of additional proposals.

Approved projects are expected to begin on or before January 1, 2009 and operate for one year. However, availability of unspent funds after June 30, 2009 is contingent upon re-appropriation in the SFY 09-10 State Budget.

C. Reporting

The SNAP project will utilize the TANF Reporting and Control System (TRACS) 2 to report the number of participants served and other program related performance measures. Claiming information for districts receiving SFY 08-09 SNAP funds is provided in Section IV below. Districts receiving SFY 08-09 SNAP funds will also be required to report quarterly program outcomes, as well as monthly numbers served. The SNAP performance measures are:

- Number of project participants obtaining employment;
- Wages and hours of paid employment at placement for project participants who obtain employment;
- Number of project participants who are retained in employment for at least 90 days and wages and hours of paid employment at 90 days;
- Number of project participants engaged in training or employment preparedness;
- Number of project participants who complete training or educational services;
- Number of project participants receiving a reduced cash benefit or case closing due to increased earnings;
- Number of project participants referred to or pending federal disability benefits (SSA, SSI and/or Veteran's benefits); and

- Number of project participants awarded federal disability benefits.

Reporting periods are: January 1, 2009 – March 31, 2009; April 1, 2009 – June 30, 2009; July 1, 2009 – September 30, 2009; and, October 1, 2009 – December 31, 2009. Reports for the quarter are due the 15th of the month following the quarter.

Districts with approved projects will be required to enter project description data, including target population(s), project services, project goals and budget into TRACS 2 by January 15, 2009. Funding will not be posted to the TRACS claiming system until this is completed.

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. **Only e-mailed or certified mail submissions will be accepted.** All proposals must be submitted on the Proposed Safety Net Assistance Project Submittal Form which is Attachment 2 of this release (an electronic version is available upon request). Plans must include the name and phone number of an individual that we may contact if any questions arise in the review process. OTDA advises all districts submitting a proposal to use e-mail delivery and read receipt. Plans must be submitted to: Susanne Haag at Susanne.Haag@otda.state.ny.us.

Certified mail submissions – Susanne Haag
NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance
Employment and Advancement Bureau
40 North Pearl Street, 11-A
Albany, New York 12243

Proposals must be received by **December 10, 2008** to be considered for funding. OTDA will provide an acknowledgement of receipt of submissions received prior to 5 pm on December 8, 2008 by 5 pm on December 9, 2008. Districts are strongly encouraged to submit proposals in time to receive this acknowledgement. If you have any questions concerning this release, please contact Susanne Haag at (518) 486-6291.

IV. Claiming Instructions

The administrative and/or contracted costs associated with approved projects under SNAP 7 should be reported as F-17 functional code expenditures and claimed in a column labeled SNAP 7 on the Schedule D-17, Distribution of Allocated Costs to Other Reimbursable Programs, (LDSS-3274). These costs will support an LDSS-3922 form entitled Reimbursement Claim For Special Projects.

Local district staff working only part-time on SNAP must be time studied and only those costs should be charged to SNAP. The LDSS-3922 for SNAP 7 should be submitted on a monthly basis to the Bureau of Financial Services using the TRACS system. Districts should retain the signed LDSS-3922 which supports the SNAP 7 claims submitted via

TRACS for audit purposes. Instructions for completing the Schedule D-17 are found in Fiscal Reference Manual (FRM) Volume 3, Chapter 18. Instructions for completing the LDSS-3922 are found in FRM Volume 2, Chapter 3.

Those districts that still have existing SNAP funds available should claim these funds first and these claim forms should be labeled accordingly.

The costs should be reported on the LDSS-3922 in the Administration Costs and Total Costs columns and claimed at 100% state share.

A-87 costs are not reimbursable under this program and are 100% local share. Reimbursement for all other expenditures is available up to the limit of the approved project budget.

Please note that the availability of unspent funds after June 30, 2009 is contingent upon reappropriation in the State Fiscal Year 2009-2010 State Budget. Funding beyond this initial period is subject to reappropriation/appropriation in the State Budget.

Based on the information provided above, final claims for the period of January 1, 2009 through June 30, 2009 are due by August 15, 2009. An extension of funding would extend the claiming period.

Any claiming questions from Regions 1 - 4 should be directed to James Carroll at (518) 474-7549, or e-mail to James.Carroll@otda.state.ny.us. Claiming questions from Region 5 should be directed to Michael Borenstein at (631) 854-9704, or e-mail to Michael.Borenstein@otda.state.ny.us.

Issued By:

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