**Achieving Self-Sufficiency & Independence Through Supported Transition (ASSIST) stipend Guidelines**

*The purpose of ASSIST is to provide funding for youth directly related to housing. Youth eligibility includes accountability, finance literacy and to attainment of self-sufficiency benchmarks.*

1. **Eligibility for youth aged 18:**
	1. Youth who aged out of foster care in Delaware.
	2. Youth who aged out of foster care in Delaware and relocated to another state.
	3. Youth who are on a board extension are eligible when they turn 18, though costs related to care of the youth should be covered by the foster parents’ board payment.
	4. Youth who exited foster care to guardianship or adoption after the age of 16.
	5. Youth with disabilities who are unable to work as determined by a medical provider are eligible and productivity hours can be modified to match the youth’s capabilities as determined by the Transitional and Independent Living (TIL) provider. If the youth changes TIL providers, information related to expectations of the youth’s productivity should be shared with the new TIL provider.
	6. If a youth is parenting a medically fragile child and is unable to work as determined by a medical provider, they are eligible to receive ASSIST when they are providing full-time parenting (parenting a child who attends daycare or school is not considered full-time parenting).
	7. Youth who are under criminal investigation or who are convicted, remain eligible for the ASSIST stipend. If the youth in incarcerated, they are not eligible while they are incarcerated. Once the youth is released, they are able to receive ASSIST if they meet other eligibility requirements.
2. **Requirements for youth aged 18:**
3. Youth must complete the forms Plan for Productive Hours, Readiness Assessment, Plan for Housing and Responsibility Agreement as a part of the initial assessment.
4. Youth must complete a financial literacy program prior to applying for ASSIST.
5. Youth must be active with a contracted TIL provider.
6. Youth must meet monthly with their TIL worker.
7. Youth must show a financial need based upon the budget worksheet.
8. Youth must meet productivity requirements
9. Youth should be preparing for employment. Requirement is that employment will be obtained within 90 days. The Plan for Employment form must be used to track employment search. The form should be used every 30 days and turned in with the Productivity Log to the TIL worker.
10. Youth must be productive 25 hour/week or 100 hours a month.
	1. Primary productivity:

• Working

• Job searching (proof of efforts must be provided)

• Caretaking of another person

• Attending school

• Au pair or nannying (proof of employment required)

• Doctor’s appointments

• Dental appointments

• One-on-one meetings with IL case worker to work on individualized IL case plan goals

• Vocational training

• Volunteering

• Transportation/Travel to work or school

• School related assignments such as projects or studying

• Mental Health therapy, treatment, or hospitalization\*

• Substance abuse treatment, therapy, or hospitalization\*

• Medical hospitalization or quarantine\*

• Life skills related workshops or training such as HOPE meetings

 \* Youth who are hospitalized for non-mental health related reasons for three or more days during a month or who have work restrictions prescribed by a doctor which will impede them from completing the full number of hours will instead only be required to complete a reasonable number of hours of productivity as determined by the TIL case manager. These hours can include any combination of primary and secondary under such circumstances. Youth who are hospitalized for mental health related matters may count 6 hours per day that they are hospitalized towards primary productive time. Such time is counted as treatment and hence meets the definition of primary productivity hours. If required to quarantine, the number of days cannot exceed a maximum of 14 consecutive days unless a doctors note indicates otherwise.

* 1. Secondary productivity:

• Time at the library (unless the time spent is for studying or job searching)

• Exercise (this includes walking a pet)

• Laundry and cleaning the home

• Grocery shopping

• Hobbies (music, art, reading, etc.)

• Visiting with family or friends, church, or other religious/positive activities

• Parenting responsibilities; including taking to daycare, events for child

• Babysitting

• Court ordered community service

• Transportation/travel related to these above areas

* 1. Youth need at least 85 hours in primary hours and no more than 15 hours in the secondary category for a total of 100 hours. A youth can obtain all 100 hours as primary hours. Any hours over 108 in either category allow the youth to receive a $100 bonus.
	2. If a youth does not provide a Productive Time Log, the youth will not receive an ASSIST check.
	3. If a youth provides a productive time log that does not include enough hours to meet the requirements, they will receive a warning. If the youth again provides a productive time log that does not include enough hours to meet the requirements, they will not receive an ASSIST check for that month. In subsequent months, when the youth submits a productive time log with hours to meet the requirements, they may be eligible to receive an ASSIST check again.
1. If youth are eligible for a stipend and are not yet ready to manage their own money, the TIL provider can oversee the disbursement of funds as determined by the TIL provider.
2. When youth are found to be responsible for their own stipend and are eligible, they must provide receipts to verify spending for six consecutive months. Receipts can also be required at any point in time after the six months to review the youth’s budget.
	* After six consecutive months, if a youth has provided all receipts, then the youth will no longer need to provide receipts of expenditures.
	* If a youth does not provide any dated receipts for expenditures, the youth will not receive an ASSIST check.
	* If a youth provides partial receipts, they will receive a warning. If they again provide partial receipts, the six months will be extended and the youth will not receive an ASSIST check until they are able to produce receipts that match their budget. Also, it may also be determined by the IL provider that the youth is no longer eligible to manage their own money.
	* Youth need to provide receipts and documentation that match the identified amounts on their prepared budget, within a $25 margin of error.
	* If, after not needing to provide receipts, there is concern about inappropriate use of funds, the TIL provider can require youth to provide receipts once more until there are no longer concerns regarding use of funds.
3. The TIL provider should verify receipts, complete a Program Verification Form for the file, and then return the receipts to the youth. Youth receiving ASSIST and pursuing any type of secondary education should also apply for Educational and Training Voucher funds.
4. Youth may use ASSIST to begin repaying student loans at a minimum of $300/month and a maximum of $500/month and youth should be counseled on the most appropriate amount to be repaid in accordance with their budget.
5. TIL provider will work with youth to help them gain skills and develop their financial ability to ultimately become self-sufficient and no longer receive ASSIST funds.
6. Youth will be responsible to apply for all other eligible benefits. Youth who are eligible for SNAP have 30 days to apply for SNAP. If they do not apply for SNAP, they are no longer eligible to include food in their budget until they have applied for SNAP.
7. Warnings for not meeting productivity hours or partial receipts are separate warnings unless both occur in one month. These are separate examples and not tied to one another.
	* If Joe does not turn in productive logs or any receipts, he will not receive a check.
	* If Joe turns in partial receipts and partial hours in one month, he will receive a warning that covers both. If Joe then does not meet productive hours in the following month, he will not receive a check.
	* If in one month, Joe turns in receipts, but does not meet productive time, he will receive a warning. In the following month, Joe meets productive time but does not provide all receipts then he will receive another warning.
8. If the youth hasn't met eligibility for the ASSIST stipend three times in a six-month period, then the youth will not receive the ASSIST stipend for three consecutive months.
9. If a youth has an asset such as a large lump sum, then verification of how they use the asset must be submitted. The monthly expenditures will be added to their monthly budget. If asset is in savings, verification of saving should be submitted.
10. **Transfer to a new TIL provider or youth moves out of state:**
	1. When a youth transfers to a different agency, the sending agency will be responsible for the stipend payment during the month of transfer.
	2. When transferring a youth to a new agency or the youth moves out of state, the sending agency should provide the receiving agency with the most recent budget sheet, productivity logs and copy of money skills certificate.
11. **Budget amounts:**
	1. The budget worksheet determines the amount of ASSIST money for which a youth is eligible. If youth do not show a need, they do not receive any ASSIST funds. There is no minimum stipend.
	2. Income includes wages, tips, commissions, personal educational awards, SSI, SSDI, SNAP, TANF and legal settlements.
	3. Maximum stipend is $1,000 with a $100 bonus for youth who exceed 108 productivity hours for a total maximum of $1,100. If a youth is repaying student loans, the maximum amount is $1,500 or $1,600 with bonus.
	4. Additional allowable expenses may increase the amount over $1,100.
	5. Maximum spending shall be as follows:
* Rent for one room $500
* Rent for an apartment $1,000
* Groceries/household supplies for one person $250 and $450 if there are two or more children. May add $60 more than SNAP eligibility
* One-time startup fee for a phone $150 and a monthly maximum of $75
* Transportation/bus pass $100
* Car payment $200 or a total of $500 combined with car insurance
* Car insurance payment $300
* Car repairs $500 a year
* Internet $100
* School loans $500
* Child support $65
	1. Emergency funding for security deposits $750, furnishings $500, post-secondary expenses $500, loans $500, medical $500, and clothing $100. Youth must use the ASSIST Emergency Funding Request form.
	2. The stipend cannot pay for pet related expenses
	3. The stipend cannot pay for DNA testing
	4. Any shared line-item household expenses should be split between any individuals residing with the youth
1. **Appeals:**
	1. If a youth meets ASSIST requirements, they receive a check. If they do not, they do not receive a check. If a youth disagrees with their TIL provider about whether they have met the ASSIST requirements, they can notify the Transitional and Independent Living Program Manager who will gather information from the youth and provider and determine whether the youth met the requirements for that month.

1. **Substance abuse:**
	1. When a youth is known to use illegal drugs or alcohol, the youth should be connected to a substance abuse provider for an assessment within 30 days if they are not already active in treatment. If the youth is recommended for treatment, they should provide documentation that they are actively participating with their treatment plan. If the youth complies, the youth can continue to receive ASSIST with receipt verification. If the youth refuses, they are not eligible for ASSIST.
	2. Youth who are eligible for medical marijuana need to provide documentation of eligibility to their TIL provider.

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1. **Eligibility for youth ages 19-20:**
	1. Youth who aged out of foster care in Delaware.
	2. Youth who aged out of foster care in Delaware and relocated to another state.
	3. Youth who exited foster care to guardianship or adoption after the age of 16.
	4. Youth must be employed or in school (unless hospitalized or quarantined).
	5. Youth with disabilities who are unable to work as determined by a medical provider are eligible and productivity hours can be modified to match the youth’s capabilities as determined by the Transitional and Independent Living (TIL) provider. If the youth changes TIL providers, information related to expectations of the youth’s productivity should be shared with the new TIL provider.
	6. If a youth is parenting a medically fragile child and is unable to work as determined by a medical provider, they are eligible to receive ASSIST when they are providing full-time parenting (parenting a child who attends daycare or school is not considered full-time parenting).
	7. Youth who are under criminal investigation or who are convicted, remain eligible for the ASSIST stipend. If the youth in incarcerated, they are not eligible while they are incarcerated. Once the youth is released, they are able to receive ASSIST if they meet other eligibility requirements.

**2. Requirements for youth ages 19-20:**

1. Youth must complete (or have on file) the forms Plan for Productive Hours, Readiness Assessment, Plan for Housing and Responsibility Agreement as a part of the initial assessment.
2. Youth must complete (or have on file) a financial literacy program prior to applying for ASSIST.
3. Youth must be active with a contracted TIL provider.
4. Youth must meet monthly with their TIL worker.
5. Youth must show a financial need based upon the budget worksheet.
6. Youth must be working or in school. Youth must be productive 25 hour/week or 100 hours a month.
7. Primary productivity:

• Working

• Attending school

• Au pair or nannying (proof of employment required)

• Vocational training

• Volunteering

• Transportation/Travel to work or school

• School related assignments such as projects or studying

• Mental Health therapy, treatment, or hospitalization\*

• Substance abuse treatment, therapy, or hospitalization\*

• Medical hospitalization or quarantine\*

• Life skills related workshops or training such as HOPE meetings

 \* Youth who are hospitalized for non-mental health related reasons for three or more days during a month or who have work restrictions prescribed by a doctor which will impede them from completing the full number of hours will instead only be required to complete a reasonable number of hours of productivity as determined by the TIL case manager. These hours can include any combination of primary and secondary under such circumstances. Youth who are hospitalized for mental health related matters may count 6 hours per day that they are hospitalized towards primary productive time. Such time is counted as treatment and hence meets the definition of primary productivity hours. If required to quarantine, the number of days cannot exceed a maximum of 14 consecutive days unless a doctors note indicates otherwise.

* 1. Youth need at least 85 hours in primary hours and no more than 15 hours in the secondary category for a total of 100 hours. A youth can obtain all 100 hours as primary hours. Any hours over 108 in either category allow the youth to receive a $100 bonus.
	2. If a youth does not provide a Productive Time Log, the youth will not receive an ASSIST check.
	3. If a youth provides a productive time log that does not include enough hours to meet the requirements, they will receive a warning. If the youth again provides a productive time log that does not include enough hours to meet the requirements, they will not receive an ASSIST check for that month. In subsequent months, when the youth submits a productive time log with hours to meet the requirements, they may be eligible to receive an ASSIST check again.
1. If youth are eligible for a stipend and are not yet ready to manage their own money, the TIL provider can oversee the disbursement of funds as determined by the TIL provider. When youth are found to be responsible for their own stipend and are eligible, they must provide receipts to verify spending for six consecutive months. Receipts can also be required at any point in time after the six months to review the youth’s budget.
* After six consecutive months, if a youth has provided all receipts, then the youth will no longer need to provide receipts of expenditures.
* If a youth does not provide any dated receipts for expenditures, the youth will not receive an ASSIST check.
* If a youth provides partial receipts, they will receive a warning. If they again provide partial receipts, the six months will be extended and the youth will not receive an ASSIST check until they are able to produce receipts that match their budget. Also, it may also be determined by the IL provider that the youth is no longer eligible to manage their own money.
* Youth need to provide receipts and documentation that match the identified amounts on their prepared budget, within a $25 margin of error.
* If, after not needing to provide receipts, there is concern about inappropriate use of funds, the TIL provider can require youth to provide receipts once more until there are no longer concerns regarding use of funds.
1. The TIL provider should verify receipts, complete a Program Verification Form for the file, and then return the receipts to the youth. Youth receiving ASSIST and pursuing any type of secondary education should also apply for Educational and Training Voucher funds.
2. Youth may use ASSIST to begin repaying student loans at a minimum of $300/month and a maximum of $500/month and youth should be counseled on the most appropriate amount to be repaid in accordance with their budget.
3. TIL provider will work with youth to help them gain skills and develop their financial ability to ultimately become self-sufficient and no longer receive ASSIST funds.
4. Youth will be responsible to apply for all other eligible benefits. Youth who are eligible for SNAP have 30 days to apply for SNAP. If they do not apply for SNAP, they are no longer eligible to include food in their budget until they have applied for SNAP.
5. If the youth hasn't met eligibility for the ASSIST stipend three times in a six-month period then the youth will not receive the ASSIST stipend for three consecutive months.
6. If a youth has an asset such as a large lump sum, then verification of how they use the asset must be submitted. The monthly expenditures will be added to their monthly budget. If asset is in savings, verification of saving should be submitted.

**3. Transfer to a new TIL provider or youth moves out of state:**

* 1. When a youth transfers to a different agency, the sending agency will be responsible for the stipend payment during the month of transfer.
	2. When transferring a youth to a new agency or the youth moves out of state, the sending agency should provide the receiving agency with the most recent budget sheet, productivity logs and copy of money skills certificate.

**4. Budget amounts:**

* 1. The budget worksheet determines the amount of ASSIST money for which a youth is eligible. If youth do not show a need, they do not receive any ASSIST funds. There is no minimum stipend.
	2. Income includes wages, tips, commissions, personal educational awards, SSI, SSDI, SNAP, TANF and legal settlements.
	3. Maximum stipend is $1,000 with a $100 bonus for youth who exceed 108 productivity hours for a total maximum of $1,100. If a youth is repaying student loans, the maximum amount is $1,500 or $1,600 with bonus.
	4. Additional allowable expenses may increase the amount over $1,100.
	5. Maximum spending shall be as follows:
* Rent for one room $500
* Rent for an apartment $1,000
* Groceries/household supplies for one person $250 and $450 if there are two or more children. May add $60 more than SNAP eligibility
* One-time startup fee for a phone $150 and a monthly maximum of $75
* Transportation/bus pass $100
* Car payment $200 or a total of $500 combined with car insurance
* Car insurance payment $300
* Car repairs $500 a year
* Internet $100
* School loans $500
* Child support $65
	1. For the ASSIST Emergency Funding Request form, the maximum spending shall be as follows:
* security deposits $750
* furnishings $500
* post-secondary expenses $500
* loans $500
* medical $500
* clothing $100
	1. The stipend cannot pay for pet related expenses.
	2. The stipend cannot pay for DNA testing
	3. Any shared line-item household expenses should be split between any individuals residing with the youth

**5. Appeals:**

1. If a youth meets ASSIST requirements, they receive a check. If they do not, they do not receive a check. If a youth disagrees with their TIL provider about whether they have met the ASSIST requirements, they can notify the Transitional and Independent Living Program Manager who will gather information from the youth and provider and determine whether the youth met the requirements for that month.

**6. Substance abuse:**

1. When a youth is known to use illegal drugs or alcohol, the youth should be connected to a substance abuse provider for an assessment within 30 days if they are not already active in treatment. If the youth is recommended for treatment, they should provide documentation that they are actively participating with their treatment plan. If the youth complies, the youth can continue to receive ASSIST with receipt verification. If the youth refuses, they are not eligible for ASSIST.
2. Youth who are eligible for medical marijuana need to provide documentation of eligibility to their TIL provider.

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1. **Eligibility for youth 21-23:**
	1. Youth who aged out of foster care in Delaware.
	2. Youth who aged out of foster care in Delaware and relocated to another state.
	3. Youth who exited foster care to guardianship or adoption after the age of 16.
	4. Youth must be employed or in school (unless hospitalized or quarantined).
	5. 21-23 year old youth are only eligible for ASSIST by using the Emergency Funding Request form for groceries, rent, utilities, security deposits, furnishings, post-secondary expenses, loans, medical expenses, and clothing.
	6. Youth with disabilities who are unable to work as determined by a medical provider are eligible and productivity hours can be modified to match the youth’s capabilities as determined by the Transitional and Independent Living (TIL) provider. If the youth changes TIL providers, information related to expectations of the youth’s productivity should be shared with the new TIL provider.
	7. If a youth is parenting a medically fragile child and is unable to work as determined by a medical provider, they are eligible to receive emergency ASSIST when they are providing full-time parenting (parenting a child who attends daycare or school is not considered full-time parenting).
	8. Youth who are under criminal investigation or who are convicted, remain eligible for the ASSIST stipend. If the youth in incarcerated, they are not eligible while they are incarcerated. Once the youth is released, they are able to receive ASSIST if they meet other eligibility requirements.

**2. Requirements for youth 21-23:**

1. Youth must complete (or have on file) the forms Plan for Productive Hours, Readiness Assessment, Plan for Housing and Responsibility Agreement as a part of initial assessment.
2. Youth must complete (or have on file) a financial literacy program prior to applying for ASSIST.
3. Youth must be active with a contracted TIL provider.
4. Youth must meet monthly with their TIL worker.
5. Youth must show a financial need based upon ASSIST Emergency Funding Request form.
6. Youth must be working or in school.
7. If youth are eligible for a stipend and are not yet ready to manage their own money, the TIL provider can oversee the disbursement of funds as determined by the TIL provider.
8. Youth must complete the ASSIST Emergency Funding Request form and have it approved by their TIL worker.
9. TIL provider will work with youth to help them gain skills and develop their financial ability to ultimately become self-sufficient and no longer receive ASSIST funds.
10. Youth will be responsible to apply for all other eligible benefits. Youth who are eligible for SNAP have 30 days to apply for SNAP. If they do not apply for SNAP, they are no longer eligible to include food in their budget until they have applied for SNAP.
11. If a youth has an asset such as a large lump sum, then verification of how they use the asset must be submitted. The monthly expenditures will be added to their monthly budget. If asset is in savings, verification of saving should be submitted.

**3. Transfer to a new TIL provider or youth moves out of state:**

* 1. When a youth transfers to a different agency the sending agency will be responsible for the stipend payment during the month of transfer.
	2. When transferring a youth to a new agency or the youth moves out of state, the sending agency should provide the receiving agency with the most recent budget sheet, productivity logs and copy of money skills certificate.

**4. Budget amounts:**

1. Youth must use the Emergency Funding Request form. Budget maximums are as follows:
* security deposits $750
* furnishings $500
* post-secondary expenses $500
* loans $500
* medical $500
* clothing $100
* groceries $250
* rent $500
* utilities $100
1. The stipend cannot pay for pet related expenses
2. The stipend cannot pay for DNA testing

**5. Appeals:**

* 1. If a youth meets ASSIST requirements, they receive a check. If they do not, they do not receive a check. If a youth disagrees with their TIL provider about whether they have met the ASSIST requirements, they can notify the Transitional and Independent Living Program Manager who will gather information from the youth and provider and determine whether the youth met the requirements for that month.

**6. Substance abuse:**

1. When a youth is known to use illegal drugs or alcohol, the youth should be connected to a substance abuse provider for an assessment within 30 days if they are not already active in treatment. If the youth is recommended for treatment, they should provide documentation that they are actively participating with their treatment plan. If the youth complies, the youth can continue to receive ASSIST with receipt verification. If the youth refuses, they are not eligible for ASSIST.
2. Youth who are eligible for medical marijuana need to provide documentation of eligibility to their TIL provider.