

P-2340 SUPPORT SERVICES (Reach Up Services rules 2303-2310.1) (24-20)

Support services are intended to help participants reach their short-term and long-term goals. Support services should contribute to the scaffolding of skills and goals so that participants can obtain employment, training, and education, and ultimately increase their income. Reach Up Case Managers and Career Coaches help participants identify goals by coaching and using the Goal Plan Do Review Revise (GPDR/R) process. Support services help remove obstacles that prevent participants from achieving their goals.

Support services also help individuals accept or maintain paid employment, participate in other Reach Up activities such as assessment and appointments, and help participants engage in training and educational opportunities.

Who is eligible for support services

Support services may be provided to Reach First, Reach Up, Reach Ahead, and Post-Secondary Education (PSE) participants, at any stage in their journey with the program(s)

Reach Up Case Managers and Career Coaches should review the types of support services that are available with each participant, and how to access those support services. Reach Up Case Managers/Career Coaches should document that participants have been informed of support services on the case note template and add agreed upon or potential support services to the Family Development Plans or goal sheets.

Transitional support services

Participants may also be eligible to receive support services if their Reach First, Reach Up or PSE benefits close, and they have income from unsubsidized employment (Code 99). These supports are limited to six months after the benefits close. Participants do not need to be meeting their work requirement, but they must have earned income that is contributing to them being ineligible for Reach First, Reach Up, or PSE. In order to issue the support service, it must be needed to maintain or increase employment.

Reach Ahead

Participants receiving Reach Ahead may be eligible for support services following the matrix ([Support Services Matrix](#)). In order to issue the support service, it must be needed to maintain or increase employment. In 2 parent households, only the employed participant is eligible for the support services. If both parents are employed in a 2 parent household, then both parents are eligible for support services if it is needed to maintain or increase employment.

Determining support services

Given the maximum spending limits, Reach Up Case Managers/Career Coaches must use coaching strategies to help identify the support services that will have the greatest impact in helping participants reach their goals. In some circumstances a participant may be asked to contribute toward the cost of the support service requested. Participants and Reach Up Case Managers/Career Coaches should also explore all other community partner resources (e.g. HireAbility, VDOL). In these situations, the Reach Up Case Manager/Career Coach should confirm that the remaining balance will be covered before issuing a support service check.

The participant should be empowered to make their own decision on what supports services will help them achieve their goals or overcome obstacles as long as it follows the guidelines outlined in the procedure and support service matrix. The Reach Up Case Manager/Career Coach should coach the participant and relay information so the participant is aware of all options. However, the participant should be empowered to make the best decision for their family and Reach Up Case Managers/Career Coaches honor the participant's expertise in their own lives.

The Reach Up Case Manager/Career Coach must explain the spending limits each time they discuss support services, so the participant can make an informed decision.

Spending limitations for non-transportation related expenses

Reach Up Case Manager/Career Coaches review support services at their initial meeting or within the first month of Reach Up services. Support services are regularly reviewed and discussed as part of the Goal, Plan, Do, Review, Revise.

Support service spending limits are outlined on the matrix ([Support Services Matrix](#)) in addition to required forms or reference to other resources. The maximum amount a participant can receive in a state fiscal year (July 1-June 30) is \$400.00 for all support services except for transportation related support services. Reach Up Supervisors cannot double the amount of non-transportation related support services.

In 2 Parent households both parents are eligible for support services up to the \$400 maximum.

Spending limitations for transportation related expenses

The maximum amount a participant can receive in a state fiscal year (July 1-June 30) for transportation related support services is \$1,000.00. Reach Up Supervisors can double the amount of transportation related support services as noted on the matrix. In 2 Parent households both parents are eligible for transportation related support services however both parents cannot use transportation related support services for the same vehicle if the support service is for a repair cost.

Special note on GNG and BGS vehicles

Reach Up Central Office will issue the check for the registration, title, and taxes for both BGS and GNG vehicles. Additionally, if there are car repairs completed on a BGS vehicle prior to the car being awarded then that will be issued by Reach Up Central Office and those expenses **do not** count towards the maximum spending limits for transportation related expenses. See [P2341](#) for more information on Transportation Opportunities.

Spending limitations continued

Spending limits ensure Reach Up stays within the Department support services budget, maximizes the number of participants that will receive support services, and creates a more equitable system where every participant is made aware of their availability. Example: If there was no spending limit in place, one participant could receive many support services from many categories while another may not receive any. This does not mean that every participant will receive \$400.00 in non-transportation related support services or that every participant will receive \$1,000.00 in transportation related support services. The amount a participant will receive will depend on their goals, obstacles, community resources, household income, natural supports, etc.

Example #1-

Mary is working on establishing childcare for her 1-year-old and is also working on gaining her license. Mary and Reach Up Case Manager/Career Coach discuss support services related to these goals and other community resources. It is determined that Mary will be authorized for a childcare subsidy and that the Reach Up Case Manager/Career Coach will support the cost of license fees. Mary is under the \$400 limit for the fiscal year.

Example #2-

Ben has started working with his Reach Up Case Manager/Career Coach and is in need of phone minutes to participate in Reach Up Services. Ben has applied for a Qlink phone, but the phone will not arrive for a month. Ben has a long work history and has a job offer that requires Ben to purchase work boots and work clothing for the position. Ben has explored all community resources. Reach Up Case Manager/Career Coach will support cost of phone minutes for a month and work boots/clothing. The cost of these support services equals \$400 for that fiscal year.

The spending limits encompass all programs (RF, RU, PSE, and RA). If a participant receives support services on one program and transitions to another, the spending limits follow them to the other program. For example, if someone is on RF and receives \$250.00 in non-transportation related support services, then transitions to RU, they would only be eligible for \$150.00 in non-transportation related support services for the remainder of the fiscal year. If a

participant closes and reopens, any supports they have already received this fiscal year would still be counted towards their spending limits. If a participant transfers to another district any support services they have already received would be counted towards their spending limits.

Dentures and childcare authorizations

Dentures and Childcare Authorizations do not fall into either category. A participant must be eligible for support services to receive help with dentures or childcare authorizations. Reach Up Case Manager/Career Coach should follow the matrix for guidance.

Denture authorizations should be reviewed with a Reach Up Supervisor prior to approval. Denture resources can be found on SharePoint [Dental Services including Denture Resources](#) (ESD Internal Link).

Childcare authorizations are not authorized for child only households by the Reach Up Case Manager/Career Coach. If a parent is receiving a Reach Up child only grant, they can apply for Child Care Financial Assistance Program (CCFAP) through the regular application. The parent can contact their [local Community Child Care Support Agency](#) if they have any questions about the application.

Caretakers receiving a Reach Up child only caretaker benefit can also apply for the Child Care Financial Assistance Program through the regular application (CCFAP).

Childcare funds that include short-term/sporadic care and recreation costs do count towards the spending limits.

Exploring Other Resources

Before a support service can be issued the Reach Up Case Manager/Career Coach in partnership with the participant, needs to explore all other resources available. This includes all community resources such as HireAbility and WIOA, household income and natural supports (family/friends). If the participant's household income or resources can reasonably cover the cost of the support service, the request should be denied. Resources will vary by participant and district. To determine what community resources may be available the Reach Up Case Manager/Career Coach can access suggested links from the support services matrix, the [Reach Up - Case Management \(Services\) \(sharepoint.com\)](#) SharePoint page (internal ESD link), VT 211 and support from Reach Up Supervisors as needed. Before a support service is issued, confirm with the participant what resources they have explored and the outcome. If there are no available resources, then Reach Up support services can be issued within the spending limits.

Reach Up Case Managers and participants can use conversations about support services as a coaching opportunity around establishing budgets, accessing natural supports, prioritizing spending, and establishing goals to increase

income. If the participant is amenable, review their budget to determine if other areas of support are needed or if a referral to another service would be helpful. Reach Up Case Managers/Career Coaches can reference tools such as [Your Money, Your Goals](#) to support participants in financial education. Reach Up Case Managers/Career Coaches can also offer the use of a [budgeting worksheet](#) to help outline income vs. expenses.

Coaching, Goal setting, and support services

Reach Up Case Managers/Career Coaches will support participants in the goal setting process which includes use of the Goal Plan Do Review Revise (GPDR/R) tools ([GPDR/R](#)—internal ESD link) creation of a Family Development Plan. Reach Up Case Managers/Career Coaches and participants should talk about support services in conjunction with the goal setting process. Consider the obstacles that are in place to a participant reaching their goal and if a support service will help to remove that obstacle. Ask appreciative questions [Appreciative Questions](#) and powerful questions [Powerful Questions](#) to help a participant set these goals. If it is identified that a support service may be needed for an established goal then document this on the Family Development Plan and on the case note template. Reach Up Case Managers/Career Coaches should inform participants of spending limitations regarding support services following the matrix guidelines ([Support Services Matrix](#)). Support services must be directly connected to the identified goal and support the participant in the progression of this goal (consider if the support service is needed to take the next step).

Example#1- **No**, do not proceed with issuing a support service.

Suzie is working on getting her GED as her identified goal. Suzie asks for a voucher to get clothing. Clothing is not directly needed to support Suzie in completing her GED. This would be an opportunity to explore other available resources for Suzie to get clothing. Document the denial in case notes.

Example #2- **Yes**, proceed forward with issuing a support service.

Suzie is working on getting her GED as her identified goal. Suzie is engaged and making progress on her goal. Suzie has asked for help with cost of the GED test. Suzie applied for funding through Vermont Adult Learning and VSAC, but there was no funding available. Suzie has not accessed any other support services this fiscal year. Proceed with paying for GED test following the matrix spending limits and guidelines. Before approving make sure to review the spending limits with Suzie and ask if Suzie wants to move forward with Reach Up covering this cost. Issue the payment following the support service matrix and document in case notes.

Incentives and goal setting

Incentives can be issued to support participants in achieving their identified goal on their Family Development Plan or GPDR/R goal sheets or for recognition of goal completion. Incentives should be discussed with the participant so the

participant can articulate what might help support their goal progression. Incentives can range in amount and frequency depending on the participant's goal/s and circumstance. It is important to consider the maximum spending limits when discussing incentives with participants. Once an incentive is issued participants are able to spend these funds based on their family's needs (EX: could use it to go to a movie, buy food, pay for a fine, or for clothing for their child).

Incentives can be used when a participant re-engages with their Reach Up Case Manager/Career Coach during a sanction to help the family to meet their basic needs. The incentive should be discussed with the participant, so the participant is aware of the maximum spending limits.

Exception Requests for Transportation

The Reach Up Case Managers/Career Coach will follow the guidance in Reach Up Services procedure on Transportation Opportunities ([P2341](#)) for exception requests pertaining to transportation. All exception requests for transportation must be approved through Reach Up Central Office.

Exception Requests for non-transportation related expenses

In order for an exception to be considered the participant must meet one of the following categories:

- Fleeing domestic violence or need of support service to safely leave abusive situation,
- Extreme geographic isolation that prevents the family from accessing food, social support, medical care, early intervention services, laundry, etc

To send an exception request the Reach Up Case Manager/Career Coach would complete an [AOPS-Inquiry-Form](#) (internal ESD link) and review with their Reach Up Supervisor before being sent to Reach Up Central Office

AHS.DCFESDCOReachUp@vermont.gov for review. All exception requests must include a current budget worksheet [Monthly Budget](#).

Self employment

Support services for self-employment are included on the matrix and spending limits should follow these guidelines.

Support service funds may not be used to support Cannabis Self Employment due to federal laws prohibiting such use of funds.

ICAN support services

Support services available through ICAN-RU are highlighted in yellow on the support service matrix ([Support Services Matrix](#)). If a participant is registered in Vermont Job Link (VJL) and has an ICAN-RU component on their Family

Development Plan, then the ICAN support services should be explored first. If the maximum available support for ICAN-RU is less than the Reach Up support services matrix then a combination can be used. The maximum amount a participant can receive in a state fiscal year (July 1-June 30) applies to both ICAN-RU support services and regular RU support services combined.

When issuing the ICAN-RU support service check through ACCESS make sure to use the correct code 70 E&T Transportation, 71 E&T Childcare, or 72 E&T Other. Use the matrix as a guide.

Exception to Spending Limits for ICAN-RU

Assistance for ICAN-RU Housing and Utility support services (electric, fuel, gas, general, internet), is exempt from the spending limits. Participants must have made progress towards an ICAN-RU component and must:

- Have a current Goal Sheet and have accomplished steps towards their goal.
- Provide a budget that shows the expense will be paid going forward or a plan for how they will increase their income to be able to afford the expense in two months.
- 30% of participant income must be used to support housing costs. If current budget supports the expense participants must provide a detailed explanation why they are requesting support.

Example #1 – **Yes**, you can do the following in the example below.

Joe asks for help with car insurance, is enrolled in an ICAN-RU component and has a VJL account. ICAN-RU support services allows up to 2 months of support for car insurance. The amount of his car insurance for 2 months equals \$200. The support service matrix for car insurance for non- ICAN related support services is also 2 months of support for car insurance. This means Joe could access \$200 through ICAN support services and \$200 in non-ICAN related support services in the fiscal year if support is needed again to help remove an obstacle to a goal. This brings the total to \$400 of support services for car insurance which falls under transportation related expenses. The maximum spending limit for transportation related expenses is \$1000. Joe is within that maximum limit. ACCESS codes should reflect both funding sources separately. In this example Reach Up Case Managers/Career Coaches should use code 70 (ICAN) for the \$200 payment and then code 59 (non-ICAN) for the \$200 payment.

Documentation of support services

The Reach Up Case Manager/Career Coach will document support services in case notes with the following information:

- Support services that have been issued
- The amount of the support service issued
- The date the support services was issued
- Any support services that were reviewed or discussed

Reach Up Case Managers should also include what support service was discussed on the Family Development Plan and GPDR/R worksheets.

Reach Up Case Manager/Career Coaches will need to document all support services issued on a spreadsheet provided by Reach Up Central Office. Support service spreadsheets will be kept on district share drives. Reach Up Supervisors will review the spreadsheet with the Reach Up Case Manager during regular supervision. VABIR leadership and Reach Up Supervisors will review with Career Coaches at least monthly. The purpose of the review is to ensure the procedure and matrix are being followed, Reach Up Case Manager/Career Coaches provide support services regularly, and multiple participants are receiving support service. Reach Up Central Office will periodically review the spreadsheets for budgetary considerations and during case consultation.

Issuing support services

Reach Up Case Managers/Career Coaches have two business days to issue a support service check after receiving a bill or request for payment from a partner, local business, or participant.

A Payment Authorization for Reach Up Support Service (form [630A](#)) may be used to allow a participant to purchase or obtain a service from a business in the community. The form is then returned to the local District office for payment.

Reach Up Case Managers/Career Coaches can issue a check through ACCESS using the CHCK C function. Checks can be written directly to a business, or checks can be written to the participant as reimbursement for an expense already paid with prior approval from the Reach Up Case Manager/Career Coach. For more information see Reach Up Services procedure [P2340A](#) on writing a support service checks in ACCESS.

Credit Card Purchase Request

Reach Up Case Managers/Career Coaches and Supervisors may request that support services for a participant be paid for by credit card when no other payment method is an option. The credit card is held in central office and the following questions below must be completed when requesting use of credit card. The Questions should be emailed to AHS.DCFESDReachUpPurchaseCard@vermont.gov .

Questions to submit for credit card purchase request:

- Participant name, SSN, and date of request
- Describe the need and why the purchase card needs to be used (instead of check, voucher, reimbursement)
- Item to be purchased (include link to item)
- Item shipped to what name and mailing address
- Participant email address

Example:

Joe and his Reach Up Case Manager/Career Coach have established that a lap top is needed for Joe to participate in college courses. Joe has explored all other available resources. Joe is needing the lap top for class in the next week, but doesn't have the Reach Up funds to purchase this and get reimbursement. Joe needs to purchase the lap top online and cannot get it from a local business with a check or voucher. The Reach Up Case Manager/Career Coach can submit the credit card request questions to AHS.DCFESDReachUpPurchaseCard@vermont.gov for review.

Once the credit card request questions have been submitted, Reach Up Central Office will review it within 2 Business days and will send a decision back to the Reach Up Case Manager/Career Coach. The Reach Up Case Manager/Career Coach will document the decision in case notes. The decision should also be saved in the participant's electronic case file.

If approved, RUCO will make the item or service purchase. Items will be shipped to the address listed on the credit card request questions.

If a return or exchange must be made, the participant must notify the Reach Up Case Manager/Career Coach as soon as possible. The Reach Up Case Manager/Career Coach will then email AHS.DCFESDReachUpPurchaseCard@vermont.gov to explain the reason for return/exchange. It will be the participant's responsibility to repackage and return the item, however if free returns are available, RUCO will email the shipping label to the participant.