

**County of Orange Social Services Agency
Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services Division**

Program/Area: CalWORKS/Eligibility
Title: Special Need Payments
Number: 100-I9
Effective Date: 11/19/2024
Approved:

Status: Approved
Revision Date:

PURPOSE

This policy is to provide guidance for evaluating and issuing Special Needs Payments.

POLICY

A special need is a need not common to a majority of recipients/applicants for certain goods or services which are essential for their support.

Eligibility Workers (EW) are responsible for assisting the client in identifying any special need they may have. The EW must provide the client with a clear explanation of the types of Special Need allowances available and the procedure for securing payment for those needs.

Special needs payments can be either recurring or nonrecurring needs. Special needs payments are added to the maximum aid payment (MAP) determined for the Assistance Unit. The following are general guidelines for both recurring and nonrecurring special needs exclusive to the CalWORKs program.

Note: For Pregnancy Special Need payments, refer to Policy 100-D2 Pregnancy Special Needs.

BOOKMARKS

[Verifications](#)
[Recurring Special Needs](#)
[Types of Recurring Special Needs](#)
[Nonrecurring Special Needs](#)
[Types of Nonrecurring Special Needs](#)
[Reporting and Duration of Special Need Payment](#)
[References](#)
[Forms](#)

VERIFICATIONS

Before any Special Need Payment is made, verification is required, and the following must be established:

- The conditions defining which needs are allowed.
- The total cost of the need and the payment plan the client will utilize to pay for the need.
- The proportion of the cost the client should be responsible for if the need is shared by others in the household.

- The time period in which the need will continue.

For Special Need Payments regarding medical expenses, the client must provide medical verification from a physician and receipts indicating the amount paid or owed for a particular expense (e.g., utility bill indicating a spike in use, estimates for any repairs, labor, and materials, etc.). If the client is unable to obtain proof, the EW must provide examples of acceptable proof and/or assist in obtaining it.

If the EW assists the client in obtaining verification, any following forms are available to use:

- CW 60 Release of Information-Financial Institution
- CW 61 Authorization to Release Medical Information
- The third page of the CW200 Authorization for Release of Information

If there is still insufficient verification after all attempts have been made, the EW should determine if the client has made a good faith effort to obtain verification. If good faith is determined, a Sworn Statement (Gen 853) will be considered adequate to verify the existence of a Special Need. However, the client's statement must still provide the information outlined in the verification bullet points at the beginning of this section.

RECURRING SPECIAL NEEDS

A recurring Special Need is a cost expected to occur during two (2) or more months in a calendar year.

The actual cost must be verified every six (6) months on the Semi-Annual Report (SAR 7) and the Re-Evaluation (RE). The total amount of Special Needs payment per AU cannot exceed the amount resulting from multiplying \$10 by the number of persons in the AU.

Example: An AU of three (3) will only be eligible for a maximum of \$30 per month.

Exception: The EW can authorize payments at the rate indicated without verification of the actual cost. However, the Special Need must be justified at least annually at RE, if not more frequently, depending on the type of need and potential for change.

Persons who are not aided, because they are excluded from the AU, are not eligible for a recurring Special Need allowance.

The following persons are excluded from the AU:

- A child living with their minor parent who is receiving Foster Care or Kinship Guardianship Assistance Program (Kin-GAP)
- Ineligible noncitizen
- Other parent of an unborn child living in the home with the pregnant person

- Supplemental Security Income/State Supplementary Payments (SSI/SSP) recipient
- Kin-GAP or Foster Care recipient
- Sponsored noncitizen whose needs are being met by a sponsor's deemed income
- Spouse of an eligible child, living in the senior parent(s) home, with no child in common for whom deprivation exists
- Fleeing felon
- Person in violation of a condition of probation or parole
- Sanctioned person
- Timed-Out adult

Clients are not eligible to receive retroactive payments for previously unreported recurring Special Needs.

Note: Individuals subject to a Child Support Penalty are eligible for a Special Need payment as their needs continue to be considered in the MAP determination.

TYPES OF RECURRING SPECIAL NEEDS

Therapeutic Diets:

A therapeutic diet may be prescribed by a medical provider to exclude foods due to allergies or food intolerance, accommodate a full liquid diet, or correct nutritional status compromised by excessive exposure to harmful chemicals.

The client is entitled to establish actual expenses related to the diet plan if it is to their benefit to do so. However, if the recommended diet plan includes one (1) or a combination of the following diets, EWs may pay the amount indicated for the highest cost diet without verification of the actual costs based on the limits set by CDSS:

\$15 for the following diets:

- Diabetic, 2200 calories or more
- High calorie – High Protein (including special formula for infant)
- Lactation (while breast feeding)

\$9 for the following diets:

- Diabetic, under 2200 calories
- Bland
- Low Fat – Cholesterol
- Low Salt (sodium, under three grams)

Note: Special Need Payments for a therapeutic diet may only be authorized when recommended by a physician for circumstances other than pregnancy.

Example: A client reports at SAR 7 they are diabetic, and their doctor has recommended they go on a special diet. The verification provided indicates the diet is for a five (5) month period. Based on the information provided, the

EW can authorize the Special Need payment and follow-up at the next mandatory reporting period.

Special Laundry Costs

If a client is required to change and clean bedding or clothing more than usual due to medical conditions, the EW may authorize \$3 per month, without verification of actual cost. If the actual cost is known, that amount may be paid.

Special Chore Services

If verified that the family caretaker or other household members are unable to do the cooking, washing, ironing, household cleaning, and similar chore services, it is possible to allow the actual cost of employing someone to perform these chores.

Excessive Utility Service

If determined that the excessive use of utilities is required for a reason not common to most clients and is essential for the support of the household, the client may be eligible to receive a special need payment for this expense. A statement from a medical provider verifying the medical condition which would necessitate this excessive use of utilities is required. The use must be essential for health reasons. If verification of exact expense amounts is provided, the actual cost of the excessive use is allowed. If verification of excessive use expenses is not provided by the client, \$5 per month will be allowed for the cost of excess use.

Special Costs of Transportation

A client may be eligible for a special transportation allowance when verified that it is essential for support (e.g., to travel an unusual distance or travel daily to receive required medical treatments). The actual cost for transportation is not to exceed the actual cost of the least expensive mode of transportation reasonably available to the client. If a client opts to use a private automobile, the rate of twelve cents (\$0.12) per the number of total miles traveled can be allowed without further documentation by the client.

Telephone

A client may be eligible for the actual cost of a special telephone service or equipment such as an amplifying device when an AU member has an auditory impairment.

Please reference Job Aid (JA) - Recurring Special Needs List for more information on Recurring Special Needs CalSAWS pages.

NONRECURRING SPECIAL NEEDS

A payment for a nonrecurring Special Need will be granted to an eligible AU when any of the following conditions exist:

- There is a household emergency resulting from sudden and unusual circumstances beyond the AU's control

- Homelessness while the AU is seeking permanent housing

An AU is ineligible to receive a nonrecurring Special Need Payment if the AU has over \$100 in nonexempt liquid resources except for funds in restricted accounts. Liquid resources of \$100 or less will not be considered for purposes of computing the nonrecurring Special Need Payment.

The total amount allowed for the payment of a household emergency cannot exceed \$600 for each incident resulting from the circumstance. Additionally:

- The amount of payment for each item to be repaired or replaced, or to assist with damage to the home, will be the actual cost, including sales tax, up to a total maximum not to exceed \$600.
- A payment will not be made to repair or replace clothing, household items, or damage to the home occupied by the AU, unless the clothing, household items, or home belonged to an AU member.

Note: Clients are not eligible to receive retroactive payments for previously unreported nonrecurring Special Needs. Payments will be made for clients actively experiencing a Special Need starting the first month Special Needs eligibility is determined.

**TYPES OF
NONRECURRING SPECIAL
NEEDS**

An AU is entitled to receive a nonrecurring Special Need Payment to:

- Repair or replace clothing or household equipment
- Provide assistance for damages to the home, or to pay for interim shelter when the AU's home was destroyed or made uninhabitable or inaccessible

When receiving these requests, the EW must consider the following:

- The loss or damage must have been caused by a sudden and unusual circumstance beyond the AU's control
- Determine the most feasible and economic method of repair or replacement, including the provision of donated or used serviceable items

Damage to the AU's Home

Within the spending limit of \$600, a payment can be made for the costs of essential repair or replacement resulting from the damage to the AU's home.

Payment will be allowed for the following costs:

- Moving and/or storage costs necessitated by the damage to the home
- Labor and material costs for repair of the home in which the AU lives and a member of the AU owns

Clothing and Household Equipment

Within the spending limit of \$600, a payment made to replace clothing cannot exceed \$25 for each member of the AU. Household equipment which can be repaired or replaced includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Bedding, dishes, kitchen utensils - \$12 for each person in the AU
- Cook stove - \$142

- Refrigerator - \$190
- Space heater - \$73
- Double bed including mattress - \$143
- Other essential furniture - \$50

Interim Shelter

The amount of the nonrecurring Special Need Payment for temporary shelter is:

- An AU with four (4) or fewer members shall receive a daily amount of \$85
- The fifth and each additional member of the AU shall each receive an additional \$15 per day, up to a maximum of \$145 per day

An AU is not eligible to receive a nonrecurring Special Need Payment for the costs of interim shelter if they are eligible to receive payment through the Homeless Assistance Program. Refer to Policy 100 – H2 Homeless Assistance for additional guidance.

If an AU has already received Homeless Assistance, and the AU’s home is subsequently destroyed, or made uninhabitable or inaccessible, the AU may then qualify for interim shelter assistance. However, both interim shelter and Homeless Assistance cannot be paid for the same incidence of homelessness.

REPORTING AND DURATION OF SPECIAL NEED PAYMENTS

A client can report having a Special Need at any time during the payment period. Recurring Special Needs that have been requested mid-period and have been verified and approved will begin the first of the month in which either the need was reported, or the verification of the need exists, whichever is later. The recurring Special Need Payment will remain in effect until the end of the SAR or Annual Reporting/Child-Only (AR/CO) payment period in which the Special Need is expected to end.

Actual costs must be verified when processing the SAR 7 for SAR AUs, and at RE for SAR and AR/CO AUs. The information provided together with the submitted verification must be sufficient for the EW to determine eligibility and/or grant amounts.

If the Special Need is time-limited, the payment will be allowed to continue until the end of the payment period in which the Special Need expires.

Example: An AU qualifies for a Special Need Payment due to unusual transportation required daily for unexpected medical visits. The need was verified and will be required for six (6) consecutive weeks. The AU will continue to receive the Special Need Payment after the six (6) weeks has concluded until the next payment period (SAR/ RE).

All Special Needs and payment information should be recorded in a journal entry, including the conditions defining which needs are allowed, the total

cost of the need, the proportion of the cost the client should be responsible for if the need is shared by others in the household, and the period in which the need is approved for.

Note: A Notice of Action (NOA) will be automatically generated by CalSAWS based on the Special Need entries made by the EW. The EW is required to verify that the automatically generated NOAs are accurate.

REFERENCES

MPP 44-211
ACL 12-25, 14-04, 15-38, 16-98, 16-98E, 18-71, 18-78, 18-106, 19-77, 19-118
ACIN I-72-20
Policy 100-D2 Pregnancy Special Needs
Policy 100 – H2 Homeless Assistance
JA - Recurring Special Needs List

FORMS

Sworn Statement (Gen 853)
Release of Information-Financial Institution (CW 60)
Authorization to Release Medical Information (CW 61)
Request for Verification- Authorization for Release of Information (CW 2200)
