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Certification Flexible Fund Guidelines Supporting Foster and Kinship Parents in the Certification Process

I. Purpose

This document establishes guidelines for expenditure of foster and kinship parent certification flexible funds ("Certification Flex Funds"), which are intended to support foster boarding and kinship homes overcome financial barriers to certification.

II. Scope

Expenses associated with preparing the physical plant for a foster child (i.e. additional beds, radiator covers, etc.) or meeting the criteria for certification of individuals within the home and the foster or kinship parent(s) themselves (i.e. medical exams, etc.) may prohibit prospective foster or kinship parent(s), or the "caregiver", from obtaining certification for their home. These items and/or goods are known as "certification expenses". Certification Flex Funds are one-time means provided to the caregiver only during the certification process to reimburse for these certification expenses. These funds must be used to resolve a certification barrier and enable the foster boarding or kinship home to be certified.

III. Allocation of Funds

With the goal of assisting Family Foster Care providers ("FFC Providers") to provide additional customer service to caregivers during the certification process, the New York City Administration for Children's Services ("ACS") will disburse additional funding to each FFC Provider under *Section 8.06 (D)* of the FFC Contract for the explicit purpose of assisting with expenses related to procurements which may cause a barrier to certification of a home. All FFC Providers will receive an allocation of \$5,000 plus an additional allocation of funds based on the FFC Provider's home recruitment targets for FY2017. Please see *Foster Home Recruitment Targets* email sent January 11th, 2017 for additional information.



All FFC Providers must comply with the approval requirements and limitations set forth in the Section IV. [Spending Parameters](#) and must account for all expenditures made with the additional funding from the Certification Flex Funds in the manner set forth in Section V. [Expenditure Procedure](#).

Funds for each Fiscal Year cover expenses incurred within the Fiscal Year (i.e. FY2017 allocations cover expenses incurred from issuance of this announcement through June 30th 2017). A review of items requested and expenses incurred will be conducted at the end of CY2017. Adjustments to funding allocations or the spending parameters for the Certification Flexible Funds may be made at that time.

Equation for funding allocation

- Agency Recruitment Target FY2017 numbers were sent to all agencies via email (*Foster Home Recruitment Targets*, January 11th, 2017)
- Baseline Allocation = \$5,000
- Additional Target Allocation = Agency specific target X \$635
- Total Annual CFF Allocation = Baseline Allocation + Additional Target Allocation
- Total FY2017 (through Jun 30, 2017) Allocation = Total Annual CFF Allocation / 2 (half of the Fiscal Year)

Example

Agency	Agency Recruitment Target FY2017	Baseline Allocation	Additional Target Allocation	Total Annual CFF Allocation	Total FY2017 Allocation
Agency A	10 homes	\$5,000	$\$635^1 \times 10 = \$6,350$	$\$5,000 + \$6,350 = \$11,350$	$\$11,350 / 2 = \$5,675$

IV. Spending Parameters

a. Certification Flex Fund Limitations

Funds may not be used for the following items:

- Finger printing fees
- Costs imposed by a court resulting from the conviction of a crime, infraction, or a violation
- Incentives for foster boarding or kinship caregivers

Other appropriate resources must have been exhausted in order to use the Certification Flex Fund. Payments may not supplant or replace other appropriate funding streams, such as medical services eligible for payment under Medicare or Medicaid or alterations to the physical plant to accommodate persons with disabilities. Please see additional information in Annex A for descriptions of additional funding resources for certification requirements.

The FFC Provider is responsible for ensuring that any construction to the caregiver’s physical plant has been approved by the building authority, if applicable, and complies with city and state housing and building regulations.

¹ The Additional Target Allocation is not an expectation for the funding needed to address one home’s financial barriers to licensure. Financial barriers may exceed or be less than the \$635 for a single home. Expenses must be justified as stated in these guidelines.



b. Certification Flex Fund Approvals

Certification Flex Funds are designed to eliminate barriers to certification of foster boarding and kinship homes which have met all other requirements. These funds may only be used as a final step in the approval and certification process.

FFC Provider approval authority for reimbursements against the Certification Flexible Funds is limited to \$1,000 per foster boarding or kinship home to address certification barriers. The FFC Provider must obtain the prior written approval of the ACS Family Permanency Division (HAFHI@acs.nyc.gov) if the certification expenses for one foster boarding or kinship home exceed \$1,000. Please see Section V. [Expenditure Procedure](#) for additional information.

FFC Providers and home finding staff members engaged with a caregiver must consider the following principles when approving Certification Flex Funds:

- Have the caregivers met all requirements for certification other than these procurements?
- Do these certification expenses pose a prohibitive financial barrier to certification for the caregiver?
- Have the other appropriate resources to support a certification barrier been exhausted?
- If applicable, has the landlord or building authority approved any construction to the physical plant?

If all of these criteria are met, certification expenses up to \$1,000.00 for one foster boarding or kinship home do not require the pre-approval of ACS.

The funds may be used for procurements such as but not limited to:

- Radiator covers*
- Beds*
- Cribs*
- Smoke detectors*
- CO2 detectors*
- Baby gates and other baby proofing items
- Railings
- Room dividers
- Painting for homes with chipped paint
- Small household repairs
- Adding a door
- Adding egress, i.e. window
- Locks
- Fence
- Dressers
- Devices to regulate water temperature
- Window guards
- Medical exam fees

*Indicates the most common uses of Certification Flex Funds



V. Expenditure Procedure

Please review the procedural process for approving and documenting expenditures and requesting approval for exceptional expenditures through the Certification Flex Fund.

Certification Flex Fund Procedural Process Outline

Responsible Party	Step	Action
FFC Provider Home Finding Team	1	After the home study is conducted, review caregiver need and capacity against Certification Flexible Fund policy criteria.
	2	Determine if a certification need will be a financial barrier to certification for the caregiver.
	3	Prepare and submit the Certification Flex Fund <i>Cover Sheet</i> and <i>Detailed Expenditure Form</i> to an authorized individual in the FFC Provider with budget authority each month.
	4	If the request for funds exceeds \$1,000.00 in total expenses for one foster boarding or kinship home , prepare and submit <i>Exceptional Expenditures Form</i> to ACS.
FFC Provider Certification Flex Fund Fiscal Officer	5	Approve or deny request. Ensure that sufficient funds are available to meet the request. Procure the item(s) for reimbursement. Follow Step 8 below before making purchases that exceed \$1000 for one foster boarding or kinship home.
	6	Purchase approved certification requirements for the family and maintain all receipts on the <i>Expenditure Receipt Form</i> .
	7	Submit prepared and approved Certification Flex Fund <i>Cover Sheet</i> , <i>Detailed Expenditure Form</i> and <i>Expenditure Receipt Form</i> to ACS Family Permanency Division (HAFHI@acs.nyc.gov).
	8	If the request for funds exceeds \$1,000.00 in total expenses for one foster boarding or kinship home , prepare and submit <i>Exceptional Expenditures Form</i> to ACS Family Permanency Division (HAFHI@acs.nyc.gov) in advance of purchasing the certification requirement(s).

Please provide electronic submissions of forms in Excel with e-signatures, if possible.



ANNEX – Additional Funding Resources for Certification Requirements

Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD)

OPWDD offers individualized, person-centered supports to children and young adults aged birth to 21 who are OPWDD-eligible with a qualifying diagnosis. OPWDD services can be provided in addition to supports received through Early Intervention (EI), the education system, and the Office for Children and Family Services (OCFS), which are the primary systems serving children with disabilities in New York State. These systems work together to ensure children have the supports they need to build on their strengths and overcome any challenges they face.

In addition, OPWDD offers services to family members to help them provide supports to their loved ones. When a referral is made, OPWDD regional staff can work with the family to learn about the child's support needs and discuss what OPWDD service options may be of benefit.

<https://opwdd.ny.gov/>

Medicaid

Medicaid offers free health insurance coverage to children and adults under the age of 65 who meet income and other eligibility requirements. You can get information about how to apply for the Medicaid Program, your application status, office locations, eligibility for Managed Long Term Care, and more. Existing clients can get assistance with the program.

<http://www1.nyc.gov/nyc-resources/service/3944/medicaid>

311 for Window Guards

The NYC Health Code requires owners of buildings of 3 or more apartments to provide and properly install approved window guards on all windows in an apartment where a child (or children) 10 years of age or younger reside and in each hallway window. If tenants or occupants want window guards *for any reason*, even if there are no resident children in the covered age category, they should request them in writing and they may not be refused. If the landlord refuses to install window guards or if they are not properly installed, call 311.