



North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services
Division of Social Services

325 North Salisbury Street • Raleigh, North Carolina 27603
Courier # 56-20-25

Beverly Eaves Perdue, Governor
Lanier M. Cansler, Secretary

Sherry S. Bradsher, Director
(919) 733-3055

March 31, 2009

DEAR COUNTY DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES

SUBJECT: INCREASE OF FUNDING AVAILABILITY FOR LINKS SPECIAL FUNDS

The Division of Social Services has been able to receive increased federal financial participation in the Chaffee program. This has resulted in the availability of an additional \$355,000 in federal funds for the LINKS program. The distribution of these funds will utilize the LINKS Special Funds program policies. Please refer to Family Services manual 1201, Child Placement Services, section VII, Adolescent Services: LINKS (http://info.dhhs.state.nc.us/olm/manuals/dss/csm-10/man/CSs1201c7-01.htm#P18_254) for further information. With this additional federal draw down, the total LINKS Special Funds state total will be \$855,000 for the federal fiscal year ending September 30, 2009. As a reminder, LINKS Special Funds are available as a supplement to the regular LINKS county allocations by promptly reimbursing counties for expenditures made on behalf of eligible youth and young adults. These funds are available immediately.

The LINKS Special Funds are now approved for expenditures to provide a "graduation award". This additional use of funds is for youth in custody or who aged out **and** who graduate from high school, GED, or postsecondary programs. Students who have the grades to graduate and who indicate their intent to do are eligible for a graduation award of \$500 during their senior year. Students who wish to do so may pay for their senior expenses out of this award. Senior expenses include class rings, yearbook, invitations, cap and gown fees, prom expenses for seniors, and any other expense directly related to graduation. They may use up to \$500 for these expenses during their senior year. Upon graduation, the balance of the \$500 should be given to the student via cash, prepaid credit card or gift card, or can be used to purchase credit at a vendor of the student's choosing. Agencies are encouraged to give the students cash or a prepaid credit card to maximize their flexibility in using these funds. Students may choose to use \$0 to \$500 for senior expenses. In order to qualify for the graduation award students must either be in DSS custody or have aged out of DSS custody, and not be 21 years of age or older. The graduation award will apply to satisfactory completion of a High School diploma, GED certification, 1 year or more vocational certification program, 2 year associate degree or 4 year college degree. Students in DSS custody who received their GED or High School Diploma while in training school or who were in a residential program such as Tar Heel Challenge or Job Corps are eligible to receive up to \$500 graduation award upon discharge from the program.

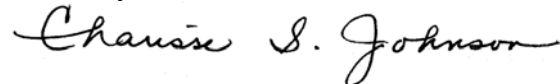
The annual limits on reimbursement for individual youth and young adults from the LINKS Special Funds are being increased effective immediately.

LINKS Special Funds Increase (Per Individual, Per Federal Fiscal Year)

CATEGORY	FORMER LIMIT	NEW LIMIT
LINKS Housing Funds	\$1000	\$1500
LINKS Transitional Funds including:	\$2250 total	\$3000 total
1. Funds to match a young adult's earnings for purchase of an automobile	1. \$1000	1. \$1500
2. Assistance with auto insurance up to 3 months	2. \$500	2. \$650
3. Graduation award for youth in custody or young adults who aged out of custody		3. \$500

If you have questions about this change in policy, contact Joan McAllister at Joan.McAllister@ncmail.net or by telephone (919) 334-1092 or Danielle McConaga at Danielle.McConaga@ncmail.net, telephone (919) 334-1011. Thank you for your dedication and service to youth in foster care.

Sincerely,



Charisse Johnson, Chief
Child Welfare Services

cc: Sherry S. Bradsher
Sarah Barham
Child Welfare Services Team Leaders
Children's Services Program Representatives
Local Business Liaisons Managers
Jack Rogers

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