
Transportation Really Is Possible (TRIP) Program Criteria

I. PURPOSE

For many young people in foster care, not having a license to drive is a barrier to education, health care, employment, and other activities that promote independence. To address this barrier, Session Law 2017-41 directed the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Social Services to establish a two-year pilot project to assist youth in foster care in obtaining their learner's permits or driver's licenses.

In collaboration with county child welfare agencies, former foster youth, family partners, and other stakeholders, the Division created Transportation Really Is Possible (TRIP) to serve as the pilot project designated by Session Law 2017-41. The purpose of TRIP is to provide, on a first-come, first-served basis, funding to support young people and caregivers with costs associated with obtaining a learner's permit or driver's license. Reimbursement is provided based on availability of funds.

II. ELIGIBILITY OF YOUTH AND CAREGIVERS

a. Eligibility of Youth and Young Adults

Young people are eligible for assistance through TRIP if they:

- Meet one of the following criteria:
 - Are at least 14 ½ years of age, but less than 18 years of age and are in foster care as defined in G.S. 131D-10.2(9); or
 - Were in foster care upon their 18th birthday and have entered into a Voluntary Placement Agreement with a county to participate in Foster Care 18 to 21; and all the criteria below,
- Have obtained approval of their caregiver in accordance with the reasonable and prudent parent standard OR from the county child welfare agency, as needed;
- Have contacted the county child welfare agency, as needed, to obtain any other approval or information needed to attend driver's education courses, obtain a learner's permit or driver's license and consulted with the county and their caregiver regarding their readiness to drive;
- Have one or more goals on their DSS-5096a Transitional Living Plan which specify the steps they must take to meet the criteria for which they are seeking support (i.e. enroll in and complete driver's education);

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- Have a written agreement with their caregiver and county child welfare agency that includes, at a minimum, the following:
 - Their plan to contribute toward ongoing costs associated with driving that are not or will not be covered by TRIP or LINKS;
 - Any educational criteria needed, such as budgeting and understanding insurance; and,
 - Caregiver's agreement to support the young person in obtaining driving experience.

b. Eligibility of Caregivers

Caregivers are eligible for reimbursement under TRIP for costs incurred in association with assisting youth in their care with obtaining a learner's permit or driver's license if they;

- Meet one of the following criteria:
 - Are providing care for a youth in foster care as defined in G.S. 131D-10.2(9), who is at least 14 ½ years of age, but less than 18 years of age; or,
 - Are providing placement to a young adult 18 years of age or older, but less than 21 years of age, who has entered into a Voluntary Placement Agreement with a county to participate in Foster Care 18 to 21; and all the criteria below,
- Have applied the reasonable and prudent parent standard, as appropriate, in the decision-making processes related to any approval the young person would need from the caregiver to attend driver's education courses or obtain a learner's permit or driver's license;
- Have contacted the county child welfare agency, as needed, to obtain any other approval or information needed for the young person to attend driver's education courses, obtain a learner's permit or driver's license and consulted with the county and the young person regarding the young person's readiness to drive; and,
- Have a written agreement with the young person and the county child welfare agency that includes, at a minimum, the following:
 - Young person's plan to contribute toward ongoing costs associated with driving that are not or will not be covered by TRIP or LINKS;

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- Any educational criteria the young person must meet, such as budgeting and understanding insurance; and,
- Caregiver's agreement to support the young person in gaining driving experience.

III. ASSESSING READINESS

For many young people in foster care, not having a license to drive is a barrier to accessing education, healthcare, and other activities. For these youth, driving is not merely a privilege, but a route to independence. Thoughtful planning between the county child welfare agency, the young person, and the caregiver to ensure the young person is prepared to assume the responsibility of driving is key to addressing this barrier to independence.

To assess readiness, county child welfare agencies should work with youth (under age 18) and their caregivers to complete the TRIP Readiness assessment. The assessment facilitates discussion about safety issues related to medical, mental health, or emotional conditions, substance use, and other areas that may impact a young person's judgement and safety behind the wheel. This assessment tool is used to facilitate a conversation about a young person's readiness to drive and jointly plan to address barriers to a young person's readiness. This assessment should not be used to create or contribute to barriers to driving.

IV. ELIGIBLE COSTS

The following costs are eligible for reimbursement under the TRIP program.

1. Driver's Education Courses

a. Driver's Education Courses Offered through Public High Schools

Most public high schools in North Carolina offer driver's education courses on-site. Public high schools in the state can charge a fee for students to take a driver's education course. Under TRIP, reimbursement may be provided for costs associated with driver's education courses offered through public high schools, if the identified school charges fees for the course and the young person is unable to obtain a waiver of the fees.

b. Driver's Education Courses Offered through Private Driving Schools

For individuals in communities where public high schools do not offer driver's education or struggle to meet demand for the course, private driving schools present an opportunity for youth in foster care to complete the course. The cost of attending a driver's education course through a private driving school can vary. Some schools offer complete packages that include classroom and road instruction for approximately \$300 or more. Rates for private driving schools are typically broken down by the hour or by the number of sessions.

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Reimbursement may be provided for driver's education courses through private driving schools for young people who are unable to access driver's education through the public-school system. Young people and caregivers are responsible for demonstrating to the county that driver's education courses are not available through local public schools.

2. Learner's Permit and Driver's License Fees

a. Learner's Permit Fees

Reimbursement may be provided for limited learner's permit fees up to the amount set by the Division of Motor Vehicles.

b. Driver's License Fees

Reimbursement may be provided for limited provisional license fees up to the amount set by the Division of Motor Vehicles.

For young adults who are at least 18 years of age, but not yet 21, reimbursement may be provided for full provisional licenses up to the amount set by the Division of Motor Vehicles.

Costs associated with obtaining a duplicate permit or license are not reimbursable under TRIP.

3. Vehicle Insurance

Reimbursement may be provided to eligible youth, young adults, and caregivers, up to \$1,000. This is a one-time cost and may not be provided to the same young person in both years of the two-year pilot program. Young people who receive assistance with insurance costs through this program are also eligible for three months or up to \$650 for insurance costs through LINKS Special Funds (Transitional). County child welfare agencies must first apply LINKS Special Funds (Transitional) to a young person's insurance costs. Once a young person has received assistance with insurance through LINKS for three months or up to \$650, counties may then provide additional support through TRIP.

This applies to young people who obtain their own vehicle insurance policy for their own vehicle, obtain non-owner's insurance for the operation of a caregiver or other person's vehicle, or caregivers who have added young people to their policies.

4. Other Costs Associated

For the purposes of this program, other costs associated with obtaining a driver's license are as follows.

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a. Vehicle Inspection

For young people obtaining their own vehicles, the cost of the required safety inspection may be reimbursed within the first year of the young person obtaining, owning, and maintaining the vehicle.

Fees that may be reimbursed in relation to vehicle inspections include safety inspection fees and emissions inspection fees (as required, depending on the vehicle).

b. Registration Fees

Every state requires motor vehicles to be registered and titled with the state's transportation agency or department of motor vehicles. A vehicle registration plate, usually referred to as a license plate, is attached to a vehicle for the purposes of identification. Registration fees are the annual fees associated with maintaining a vehicle's registration and license plate.

Reimbursement may be provided through TRIP for registration fees up to the cost of the registration if a young person is acquiring their own vehicle. These costs may be reimbursed within the first year of the young person obtaining, owning, and maintaining the vehicle.

c. Taxes

Reimbursement may be provided for vehicle property taxes up to the cost if a young person is acquiring their own vehicle. This cost can be reimbursed within the first year of the young person obtaining, owning, and maintaining the vehicle.

d. Additional Fees

For young people who may not have access to a vehicle for taking the driver's test at a local Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), fees associated with paying a private driving school for access to a vehicle for this test may be reimbursed.

e. Incentives for Caregivers

Caregivers may be provided an incentive from \$75 up to \$100 for allowing a young person to use their vehicle for the driver's test to obtain their learner's permit or driver's license. TRIP will not cover costs associated with any damages to the vehicle caused by the young person during the driver's test.

f. Vehicle History Report

For young people obtaining vehicles, TRIP may reimburse for the cost of vehicle history reports (Carfax, AutoCheck, etc.) up to \$100.

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Reimbursement for this cost may be provided when such a report is not provided by the owner or dealership selling the vehicle.

V. APPLICATION, REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION, AND REIMBURSEMENT PROCESS

To request reimbursement through TRIP, a young person or caregiver must incur an eligible driving-related cost, outlined in section IV. Eligible Costs of this criteria, and submit the required documentation to the county child welfare agency to request reimbursement. Counties will provide reimbursement to the eligible young person or caregiver for eligible costs, and then submit a request for reimbursement to the Division of Social Services. Reimbursement is provided based on availability of funds.

Steps Young People or Caregivers Must Take

In addition to meeting the eligibility criteria previously described, young people or caregivers must provide the following documents to the county child welfare agency to receive reimbursement:

- Receipts of eligible costs incurred
- Documentation of enrollment in driver's education enrollment / documentation of course completion

Steps County Child Welfare Agencies Must Take

1. Submit TRIP Request for Reimbursement

When the county child welfare agency determines that the reimbursement request is for an eligible driving related cost, the county will reimburse the young person or caregiver for the incurred cost by using county funds.

The county must submit a request for reimbursement along with the supporting documentation directly to the State LINKS Coordinator, using the TRIP Request for Reimbursement form. Reimbursement requests must be submitted by the 15th of the month for services rendered the previous month.

The county must provide the young person's name, date of birth, SIS number, the amount the county is seeking in reimbursement and the eligible cost for which the county is seeking reimbursement.

2. Provide Required Documentation

When a county child welfare agency submits the TRIP Request for Reimbursement, the agency must also provide the following supporting documentation:

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- Receipts for eligible costs incurred
- Documentation of driver's education enrollment / documentation of course completion