

**NORTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
BISMARCK, NORTH DAKOTA
November 14, 2016**

PI 16-42

TO: Regional Supervisors
County Social Services
Division of Juvenile Services
Tribal Social Services
PATH

FROM: Deb Lachenmeier, Title IV- E Eligibility Specialist
Kelsey Bless, Permanency Administrator

SUBJECT: Irregular Payment Category 50 (Transportation)
623-05-30-25

PROGRAMS: Foster Care

EFFECTIVE: **Immediately**

RETENTION: Until Manualized

Children and Family Services (CFS) updated policy specific to Category 50 irregular payments for transportation costs related to foster care. For questions regarding transportation for children in foster care, contact Deb Lachenmeier, Title IV-E Specialist at 701-328-1710 or Kelsey Bless, Permanency Administrator at 701-328-3581.

Category 50 - Transportation Costs 623-05-30-25

Transportation for a foster child is necessary to maintain connections and assist with reunification efforts. Arranging for and paying costs of necessary transportation for a child or parent to the foster home or a RCCF/group home is the responsibility of the County Social Service Board. Parents unable to pay for transportation, may be eligible to receive assistance through the County for their travel costs.

Parent Responsibility- Visitation/ Travel Costs

Parents, if able, have a responsibility to be involved in their child's case plan and pay their own travel expenses related to visitation of their child placed in foster care. This is separate from any amount they pay to child support.

A parent requesting financial assistance must complete the [SFN 1023](#), "Foster Care Transportation Reimbursement Budget Sheet". The form is designed to determine eligibility for transportation reimbursement and is only required to be completed once; no redetermination is required. Based on the information on the completed form, the parent(s) are either "eligible" or "not eligible" for transportation reimbursement. Parents may reapply if their financial status changes or they are experiencing a financial hardship.

Category 50, Transportation

Transportation reimbursement is specific to foster children placed with a licensed/approved (Tribal Affidavit) foster care provider. The foster care case manager is responsible to identify transportation needs that support the case plan. Transportation costs must be evaluated based on family need, family contribution, and travel schedule.

When a child is placed in a group/residential child care facility, the team must consider what a facility will provide to a parent or guardian upon arrival for visitation at the facility (Ex: lodging and meals). In order to claim reimbursement for travel, transportation costs must be calculated, documented, approved by the Child & Family Team and provided to the eligibility worker for payment prior to reimbursement. Reimbursement cannot exceed the current state rate for mileage and per diem. If changes occur between Child & Family Team meetings, written approval must be obtained from the Regional Supervisor.

A copy of the approval to authorize an irregular payment must be provided to the eligibility worker and placed in the child's eligibility file.

NOTE: The basic foster care maintenance rate issued to the foster care provider includes the costs of transporting a foster child locally to and from sporting events, extra-curricular activities, school functions, etc. An irregular payment cannot be authorized to accommodate day-to-day transportation needs.

Code under Category 50

- **51 – Travel for foster child:** Home visits/reunification or other visitation to maintain family connections.
- **52 – Travel for parent/guardian to RCCF:** Visits to the foster child placed in a Group/Residential Facility (RCCF) only.
- **53 – Travel for foster parents:** To transport a foster child to school in which the child is enrolled at the time of placement.

Code 51 (Travel for foster child only) can be applied when:

1. The foster child travels to a home visit, or
2. The foster child travels to another location to visit their parents, siblings, relatives, or other caretakers for reasons of reunification or maintaining family connections.

Code 51 Documentation

Transportation costs must be calculated and determined by planning the trip for the child. Documentation must be placed in the eligibility file for auditing purposes with consideration given to mileage, public/ commercial transportation, lodging and meal expenditures. Meal and mileage reimbursement must follow North Dakota guidelines and cannot exceed the established in-state per diem rates, even if the travel is to another state. The child's foster care case manager is expected to seek the lowest possible rate when public or commercial transportation is required. Lastly, receipts for tickets and lodging must be presented for reimbursement and retained by the county in the eligibility file for auditing purposes.

Code 52 can be applied when:

1. Visitation to a foster child in a Group/ Residential Facility (RCCF) by the child's parent/guardian/other designee to maintain family connections or achieve permanency,
 - a. Participation in treatment activities (Ex: family week) provided by the facility requiring attendance from the family/designee to achieve the permanency goal.

The costs for additional family members to participate in the facility visit with the foster child are not reimbursable.

Code 52 Documentation

Transportation costs must be evaluated based on family need, travel schedule, and understanding of what the facility will provide upon arrival. If determined eligible for reimbursement, transportation costs must be calculated by planning the trip for the approved parent/s or guardian. Documentation must be placed in the child's eligibility file for auditing purposes. Lodging and public/commercial transportation needs must be approved and receipts provided for reimbursement. The facility and foster care case manager are expected to seek the lowest possible rate when commercial transportation is required. Reimbursement for meals and mileage must follow North Dakota guidelines and cannot exceed the established in-state per diem rates, even if the travel is to another state.

Code 53 can be applied when:

1. The foster parent provides reasonable travel for the child to remain in their school of origin upon placement into the provider's home, located outside the established school boundaries*.

Code 53 Documentation

Transportation costs must be calculated, documented, approved by the Child & Family Team and provided to the eligibility worker for payment purposes prior to reimbursement. Reimbursement cannot exceed the current state rate for mileage or the established school/city bus transportation costs.

Foster care irregular payment reimbursement for excess school transportation is available for children placed into a licensed or approved (Tribal affidavit) foster home. If the child is placed in an unlicensed home, transportation reimbursement to the school of origin cannot be accommodated with foster care funds.

*Reimbursement of expenses to transport a foster child to and from school located within the established school boundaries of the foster parent's home is part of the standard foster care maintenance rate.

The foster child's school of origin may change depending on their foster care placement. If a foster child's placement changes, the school of origin would be considered the school in which the child was enrolled at the time of the placement change.

Travel for Foster Child's Medical

Transportation costs for medical services and appointments are not allowable expenditures with foster care funds. Medical travel questions should be referred to the County Medical Services eligibility staff.

Administrative Costs – SFN 119

Reunification or placement costs not covered through irregular or standard maintenance payments may be allowable as administrative costs claimed for reimbursement on SFN 119, "Monthly Summary of CSSB Operating Expenditures." The purpose of SFN 119 is to create cost pools by program classifications. The data from the SFN 119 is used to prepare reports for the federal and state government, the legislature and the general public. Administrative expenditures reported by classification are used to claim federal and state administrative reimbursement at various percentages.

The SFN 119 must be completed by the County and submitted to NDDHS Fiscal Administration each month by the 10th. Reasonable transportation costs are reimbursed to the County after submitting the SFN 119.

Allowable Administrative Expense (SFN 119)

Allowable administrative transportation costs for foster care include:

1. The **foster child's** travel costs
 - a. To attend court hearings, Child & Family Team meetings, etc.
 - b. To and from a foster care placement.
 - c. To and from pre-placement visits (secondary).
2. The foster child's **Parent/Sibling** travel:
 - a. To visit the foster child in the family foster home.
 - b. To visit the foster child in a Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility (PRTF).
3. The foster child's **Foster Parents** travel:
 - a. To attend court hearings, Child & Family Team meetings, mandatory case conferences, etc.
 - b. To visit the foster child who is out-of-home, inclusive of placement in a Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility (PRTF).

Total transportation costs are billable only once.

Quick Reference Chart - Transportation

A chart is included to assist staff in determining what transportation costs are reimbursable, and in what manner those costs will be reimbursed.

1. [Transportation Reimbursement](#) -- Quick Reference.
2. ~~[Visitation Expense Reimbursement for Child's Family](#)~~ [Quick Reference](#)
3. ~~[Pre-placement Visits in Family Foster Home: Transportation for Child](#)~~