

Reasons for Decision:

The appellant appealed that funds for a monthly bus pass were removed from the appellant's budget. The appellant had also appealed the amount of the appellant's therapeutic diet allowance, and an unpaid ambulance bill was attached to the appellant's appeal. At the hearing the appellant indicated that the diet allowance and ambulance bill issues were withdrawn.

The Department indicated that they received a written request from the appellant's doctor indicating that the appellant could benefit from a bus pass. The Department also received a letter from the appellant's <reference removed> indicating that the appellant is required to attend treatment, participate in leisure activities, attend medical appointments and attend mental health related appointments to support the appellant's request for a monthly bus pass. The Department also received a letter from <reference removed> indicating that the appellant would begin to attend their program three days per week.

The Department assessed the appellant's eligibility for a bus pass for both health reasons and as a person enrolled in a program to address addictions. The Department indicated that there was no information regarding the frequency of specific medical appointments to add transportation funds to the appellant's budget. The program indicated the appellant could provide more specific information or request tickets on an as needed basis when the appellant had a specific medical appointment. The Department indicated at the hearing that they could not approve an addictions bus pass as the appellant had already received a bus pass for a total of ten months and their policy indicates that transportation for self help groups or community-based programs are to be approved for a maximum of six months, and only the director in specific circumstances can authorize for a longer period of time. A letter was sent on <date removed> to the appellant indicating that more specific information was required to add transportation allowance to the appellant's budget. Another letter was sent on <date removed> indicating that persons are only allowed a bus pass for the purpose of addressing an addiction for a maximum of eight months in their lifetime.

At the hearing the appellant and the appellant's advocate indicated that the appellant is in need of a monthly bus pass for multiple reasons, and that the appellant's situation should be looked at in totality. The appellant's total transportation needs include attending counselling and support at <reference removed> at least once, preferably twice a week; attending <reference removed> for addictions aftercare three times per week, attending <reference removed> meetings a minimum of once per week, appointments to see <reference removed> every second week, medical appointments approximately twice a month. The appellant also stated that the appellant's doctor wants the appellant to donate blood once a month to get rid of excess iron in the appellant's system. In addition it is very important for the appellant's mental health and a <reference removed> that the appellant get out of the appellant's home and participate in leisure activities. The appellant indicated that the appellant's multiple health conditions make walking very difficult.

After carefully considering the written and verbal information the Board has determined that there was sufficient rationale to justify that the appellant receive an addictions related bus pass. The Employment and Income Assistance Program received verification that the appellant would be attending the <reference removed> three days per week, and also verification that the conditions of the appellant's <reference removed> required the appellant to attend <reference removed> at least one day per week. The policy regarding transportation for persons enrolled in an approved program to address addictions in Section 22.4.9 of The Employment and Income Assistance Administrative Manual does not indicate that provision for a bus pass is a maximum of six months in a person's lifetime as indicated in the Department's report. It would seem reasonable to the Board that the director would exercise the discretion as indicated in the policy as the appellant had recently been released from a period of incarceration and requires support in order to re-establish in the community. The ability to attend <reference removed> and aftercare program is an important factor in the appellant's return to the community. Therefore the Board has varied the decision of the director and orders that funds for a bus pass be added to the appellant's budget effective <date removed> for a period of six months to <date removed>.

The Board has not backdated the funds for a bus pass as the opportunity to attend these programs has passed. Once the addiction bus pass is up for review, the appellant may need to provide more specific information to verify the appellant's attendance at <reference removed> programming, and specific medical related appointments to receive further funds for transportation in the appellant's budget.

