

Reasons for Decision:

Order # 1516-301

The appellant appealed that the appellant was denied a start-up allowance.

The Department reported at the hearing that the appellant, along with the appellant's advocate requested the start up funds due to an infestation of bed bugs. The Department denied the request stating that it does not fall within the guidelines to qualify for start- up funds. The Department advised that they did issue <amount removed> for bed and bedding in <date removed> and provided the appellant with information to obtain gently used home furnishings.

The appellant attended the hearing with an advocate. The appellant reported that the appellant shouldn't be denied based on bed bug infestation and believes that the appellant's circumstances do meet the criteria. The appellant is a person with a disability who was recently institutionalized. The appellant was couch surfing when released and has only ever had limited belongings. The appellant advised that the appellant's furniture was not destroyed by the appellant due to bed bugs. The appellant moved out from a bad roommate situation and when the appellant returned for the appellant's belongings, found that the appellant's roommates threw everything out accusing the appellant of bringing bed bugs into the home.

The appellant's advocate stated that although the appellant left the appellant's parental home some years ago, the appellant has never lived independently. Previously the appellant was in a hospital, group homes and the institution, which all provide furnishings. The worker stated that the appellant's situation is the same as a person with a disability leaving an institution or parental home for the first time. The appellant had only two bags of clothing when the appellant moved into the appellant's suite. The appellant has been given a few dishes but mostly has been borrowing furnishings which the appellant is required to return. The appellant doesn't have essential household items such as linen, pots and pans, cutlery and furniture.

Section 21.1.3 of the Employment and Income Assistance Administrative Manual states:

Allowable items

Where participants cannot find furnished accommodations, as required, a one-time allowance of up to \$500.00 may be authorized in accordance with regional guidelines approved by the District Director for the purchase of essential household furnishings, including beds and bedding if required, to:

- a recently separated, sole-support parent who is unable to obtain marital property;*
- a new sole-support parent leaving the parental home who is unable to retain available furniture;*
- a person with a disability leaving an institution or parental home who is unable to retain available furniture; or*

- *participants whose household items are accidentally destroyed, e.g., in a fire.*

After carefully considering the written and verbal information the Board has determined that the appellant's request for a start-up allowance has not been correctly assessed by the Department. The Board finds that the Department approached reviewing this for eligibility solely from the sense of the bed bug infestation in which they do not provide replacement furniture due to bed bugs except in the case where Public Health staff orders that furniture or mattresses be removed. The Board finds that the appellant met the criteria under Section 21.1.3, in particular the last two bullet points.

The appellant is a person with a disability leaving an institution and the parental home and is unable to retain available furniture without financial assistance. The appellant's household items were destroyed by the appellant's roommates and the appellant was not aware that the appellant's belongings were gone until the appellant returned to the appellant's previous home with the appellant's parent to move the appellant's belongings out and found out everything was gone. The Board agrees with the <reference removed> who finds this situation was outside of the appellant's control similar to someone who loses their possessions to a fire.

The Department confirmed at the hearing that bed and bedding is an allowance covered under this section of the Regulation and is not an additional allowance. Therefore the Board orders the Department to provide start up allowance in the maximum amount of \$500.00 less the <amount removed> already received for bed and bedding in <date removed>.

The Department made mention at the hearing of a couple of benefits the appellant may be entitled to and the Board recommends that they review those with the appellant as well as any other benefits for which the appellant may be eligible.