

Families First Authorization and Case Management

Policy 23.18

Effective: July 1, 2024

Introduction

The Tennessee Department of Human Services shall authorize Families First grants to assistance units appropriate for their determined eligibility status and make changes to existing assistance units to ensure the ongoing cash grant amount is correct.

Scope

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all eligible assistance units are approved for and continue to receive the correct cash grant.

Policy

Authorization of Grants

1. Once the assistance unit (AU) has been determined to meet all points of eligibility, the Families First grant must be authorized.
2. Once authorized, the cash grant will be made available to the AU on an Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card the following day, if the AU currently has a card. For AUs that do not have a card, a card with benefits pre-loaded will be mailed to them on the day following cash grant authorization.

Differential Grants

1. Certain Families First AUs, with one (1) to five (5) individuals, are eligible for larger Families First grant amounts called differential grants.
2. The following AUs are eligible to receive differential grants:
 - a. Child only cases
 - b. Disabled caretakers as outlined in policy [23.13 Families First Work and/or Educational Activity](#).
 - c. Caretakers caring for a disabled relative living in the home.
 - d. Caretakers age sixty-five (65) and older.
3. AUs are not eligible for a differential grant when the caretaker is:
 - a. Not included in the AU because they are an ineligible non-citizen.
 - b. A minor parent.

Designation of a Protective Payee

1. A protective payee will be named for an AU in the following situations:
 - a. The customer applying for Families First has a guardian, in which case the guardian will be named payee for the grant.

- b. A child who has a legal guardian is living in the home with a relative within the specified degree of relationship, in which case the guardian will be named payee for the AU.
 - c. The caretaker is a minor age fourteen (14) or under, or is a minor deemed in need of a protective payee.
 - d. The caretaker has failed to comply with EBT restricted locations requirements as outlined in policy [23.12 Families First EBT Location Restrictions](#).
 - e. The caretaker has failed to comply with drug testing requirements as outlined in policy [23.06 Families First Drug Testing](#).
 - f. There is an emergency situation that will not exceed a three (3) month period. When an emergency situation becomes known, the caseworker will:
 - i. Determine the nature of the emergency, the whereabouts of the caretaker and the children, and the name, telephone number, and address of the person reporting the emergency.
 - ii. Secure the name of a protective payee (from the caretaker, if possible)
 - iii. Determine continued eligibility for the AU and make any necessary changes.
 - iv. Review the case within three (3) calendar months to determine the AU's circumstances and determine ongoing eligibility.
2. Tennessee Department of Human Services (TDHS) employees cannot be named as a protective payee.
 3. A business cannot be named as a protective payee.

Changes Between Renewals

1. Families First customers must report any change in circumstance to TDHS within ten (10) calendar days of the date the change occurs.
 - a. The Eligibility Counselor or TANF Case Manager will request verification of all reported changes in writing.
 - b. The request for verification will allow ten (10) calendar days from the date the request is mailed to provide verification of the change.
2. For cases in which any individual is being added to an existing AU, the AU must submit a signed [HS-0169 Application for Assistance](#) along with the needed verification(s) for the change.
3. When an AU is moving from one (1) county of residence to another within the state of Tennessee, an application must be filed in the new county of residence within ten (10) calendar days of establishing residence. A renewal interview must be completed within thirty (30) calendar days of the case being transferred to the new county.
4. Eligibility Counselors and/or TANF Case Managers must process all changes timely.
 - a. When verification is received, the case must be processed within ten (10) calendar days of receipt of the verification.
 - b. When verification is not received within ten (10) days following the written request, action must be taken to close the case on the eleventh (11th) calendar day.
5. When the ongoing eligibility or ineligibility has been determined, the Eligibility Counselor must either deny or reauthorize the case, as appropriate.
6. Anytime there is a change between renewals, the circumstances surrounding the change must be reviewed for a potential overpayment or underpayment as outlined in policy [23.19 Families First Overpayments and Underpayments](#).

Bankruptcy

1. Bankruptcy orders may impact a Families First cash grant by ordering that all or part of the grant be paid directly to the bankruptcy court for disbursement.

2. For an AU that has an existing bankruptcy order, all case changes due to changes in circumstance must be made and appropriate action must be taken to increase or decrease the cash grant or close the case.
3. The cash grant cannot be reduced due to an overpayment. All overpayments must still be processed as outlined in policy [23.19 Families First Overpayments and Underpayments](#).

Supporting Documents

[23.13 Families First Work and/or Educational Activity](#)

[23.12 Families First EBT Location Restrictions](#)

[23.06 Families First Drug Testing](#)

[23.19 Families First Overpayments and Underpayments](#)

[HS-0169 Application for Assistance \(English\)](#)

[HS-0169sp Application for Assistance \(Spanish\)](#)

[HS-0169a Application for Assistance \(Arabic\)](#)

[HS-0169s Application for Assistance \(Somali\)](#)

[HS-0169sw Application for Assistance \(Swahili\)](#)

[Families First Authorization and Case Management Procedure Manual](#)

Definitions/Acronyms

Term	Definition
Child Only Case	Cases in which the caretaker is a non-parental relative who is not included in the AU or the caretaker(s) is a Supplemental Security Income (SSI) beneficiary.
Protective Payee	An individual who has access to the AUs cash benefits and is responsible for and expected to use the cash grant for the benefit of the child(ren) and act for the caretaker in relation to the child. The protective payee may be related or unrelated and may live in the home or apart from the AU.
Acronym	Expansion
AU	Assistance Unit
EBT	Electronic Benefits Transfer
TDHS	Tennessee Department of Human Services

Supersedes

Policy 23.18 Families First Authorization and Case Management, eff. date 11/15/2023; Policy 23.20 Families First Medical Evaluation Unit Referrals, eff. date 07/01/2023

Approval History

Approved By	Approver Title	Approved Date	Effective Date
Clarence Carter	Commissioner	06/26/2024	07/01/2024
Clarence Carter	Commissioner	11/08/2023	11/15/2023
Danielle Barnes	Commissioner	01/29/2018	02/15/2018

Revision History

Date	Version	Location of Change	Description/Reason for Change
06/26/2024	07/01/2024	Policy Section	This policy revision removed references to temporary incapacity and MEU.
11/08/2023	11/15/2023	Introduction, Policy Section, Supporting Documents, and Definitions.	Renumbered the policy document and updated the numbers of policy documents referenced. Minor language changes for clarification Updated Supporting Documents links.
01/29/2018	02/15/2018	N/A	New Document

Approved By	<i>Clarence H. Carter</i>	Approval Date	06/26/2024
Authority	Tenn. Comp. R. & Regs. 1240-01-18, 1240-01-19, 1240-01-50-.20(1)(d)	Effective Date	07/01/2024
Application	All TDHS Family Assistance Staff and Contractors		