

Subject: Protecting Personal Allowance – Revised May 16, 2014

Personal allowance (PA) is intended to ensure individuals have funds to meet their personal needs and recreational wants and desires. All employees responsible for administering or monitoring PA have an important role in ensuring the appropriate and intended use.

Here are some important things to remember:

- **The individual must never be given more money than the amount specified in their assessment.** Personal expenditure plans (PEP) and money management assessments (MMA) are done for every Individual. These documents inform how much money an Individual can responsibly handle on their own.
- **Original vendor receipts must be obtained** for purchases over \$15 that are made by agency staff or when funds are given to an individual's family or friend to spend on their behalf. If it is not practical to get a vendor receipt (garage sale, street vendor, etc.) a description of the item purchased, date, dollar amount and vendor name should be recorded. **A receipt is not required when funds are used for a recreational activity that costs \$15 or less** or when an individual makes a purchase independently. However – it's always a good idea to get a receipt if possible.
- **Retailer Reward Programs** – When an individual's personal funds are used to make a purchase and the retailer issues a store coupon, gift card, gift certificate or any other type of reward as a result of the purchase and that reward can be redeemed for cash, merchandise or other considerations, it is the sole property of the person whose funds were used for the original purchase and may only be redeemed for the personal use and benefit of the individual. The retailer rewards coupon or certificate number and amount of the reward should be entered on the individual's personal ledger maintained in the residence as part of the transaction description when the purchase which earned the reward is registered in the ledger.

If a retailer rewards coupon or certificate is missing or lost and the agency staff has the rewards number, the agency staff should contact the store or the chain's 1-800 number to find out if the reward has been cashed. If it hasn't, this should be noted in the ledger and the agency does not have to give the person the value of the missing rewards coupon. If the reward was used and there is no evidence that the reward was used for the individual's behalf (for example on later receipts), the agency should give the value of the reward to the individual. If the agency staff cannot confirm whether it was used, the agency should give the value of the reward to the individual.
- **Ledger cards or electronic ledgers must be completed accurately and on time.** A concise description of each transaction must be provided, i.e. a brief description of the service or item purchased and where/from whom. Documentation should occur at the time of the transaction. **Every person's funds must be tracked and accounted for separately.** **Ledger cards (paper or electronic) must be adequately secured** to ensure privacy.
- **Funds must be kept in a secure, locked area for safekeeping in the residence.** It is best practice to limit the number of people who have direct access to PA accounts. Agencies should regularly review the impact of personnel changes on the security of the money.

Individuals who manage their own Personal Allowance should be reminded to keep their funds secure.

• **Staff who are given funds on behalf of an individual should be informed of agency expectations.** Employees should be trained in policies and procedures for security of funds while in their possession, allowed expenditures, and time frame for return of receipts and change. It is required to document any funds disbursed and a best practice to receive staff's acknowledgement of his/her acceptance of the funds via a ledger or other means to assist in accountability. **Employees are not allowed to spend their own funds on behalf of any individuals and later be reimbursed from an individual's personal allowance.**

• **For 2014, cash available at the residence cannot exceed \$210 per person** (unless requested for a specific purpose; then it must be used within 14 days). The cash cap increases each year if there is a Cost of Living Adjustment. Information concerning the current cash cap and PA amounts is available by using the link below, then clicking on the **2014 SSI Information** link.

http://www.opwdd.ny.gov/opwdd_resources/benefits_information/social_security_and_supplemental_security_income

• **Routine auditing can assist in the security and competent accounting of funds.** Regulation requires annual agency level random auditing of 25% of residential PA accounts, and 10% of family care PA accounts. However, thorough, frequent, and unannounced auditing at the residential level can be beneficial in quickly identifying entry and computation errors, fund misuse, and missing funds. It may also assist in identifying the cause or source of any errors or misuse.

Additional Information

1. Personal Allowance Training is conducted by OPWDD Revenue Support Field Operations twice a year. Cash managers and other appropriate staff are encouraged to attend (see OPWDD website for training details and schedule).

2. Specific Personal Allowance questions may be directed to your local Revenue Support Field Office. Contact information for these offices can be found at:

http://www.opwdd.ny.gov/opwdd_resources/benefits_information/revenue_support