

<p style="text-align: center;">City of Philadelphia Department of Human Services</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Community Umbrella Agency Procedures For Accessing DHS Support Services</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Emergency Placement Prevention and Family Reunification Funds</p>	
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Introduction

Families at times are separated or reunification is delayed because they lack the concrete resources to make the changes required to keep children safe. In the past, the cost of the inability to respond to the needs of families has been high, causing the emotional trauma of loss and separation, as well as the needless fiscal costs of maintaining children in care. The Emergency Placement Prevention and Family Reunification Fund provides CUAs with a critical resource to help families. This fund is meant to be easily accessible to the CUAs. This fund is not simply an emergency fund, but a fund to be used strategically to **advance three critical child welfare outcomes**:

- Keep children and youth safely in their homes.
- Reunite children and youth with their families in a timely manner.
- Achieve permanency through Adoption or Permanent Legal Custodianship (PLC) by DHS paid caregivers.

Additionally, it can address true emergencies because of its administration through Public Health Management Corporation (PHMC), which will facilitate a check within five to seven business days of PHMC's receipt of a **completed and approved** request as long as resources are available.

The Purpose of the Fund

The Emergency Placement Prevention and Family Reunification Fund has been established to prevent placement of children and youth in out-of-home care, to achieve reunification or achieve permanency through one-time or short-term emergency support. This fund must be the resource of last resort after all other sources of funds have been exhausted or found not available. Use of this fund is one step in the reasonable efforts requirement, and as such, a copy of the approved request must be scanned and maintained in Electronic Case Management System (ECMS). The outcomes of the fund's use are carefully tracked based on the specified outcomes.

Beneficiaries of the Fund

Children, youth, and families who have been accepted for child welfare for child protection services are eligible beneficiaries of the fund.

Allowable Expenses

Allowable expenses include emergency expenses for: housing; home repairs; certain services and items. For emergency items CUA staff are encouraged to use discount and second hand stores and other vendors in the community. In most instances families are limited to one request per year. Exceptions to the monetary and time limits may be granted with the approval of the CUA Director. After payment, it is the CUA Case Manager's or other CUA support staff's responsibility to regularly review the family's budget and the payment of the bills so that problems can be quickly resolved.

Expenses have varying limits. They are household expenses that are family driven (i.e., costs associated with maintaining a household where children and youth are living or are to be reunited) and should not exceed \$1,500 or the limits as detailed in the request form **if there is reasonable proof** that the household is sustainable with its current resources after the request is granted.

Roles and Responsibilities

DHS Project Manager: Provides oversight for the administration of the PHMC contract. In this capacity the Project Manager will: 1) ensure that disbursement activities are in compliance with the contract; 2) resolve contract interpretation issues; 3) alert DHS leadership to critical issues impacting fund disbursement; 4) provide final approval for all funding requests; and 5) prepare Fund disbursement reports for DHS leadership.

Administrative Responsibility for the Funds: Public Health Management Corporation (PHMC) is responsible for the administration of the Funds.

Authority to Release Funds: the CUA Case Management Directors will function as a gatekeeper for the funds. They are the primary person with whom PHMC will communicate regarding requests for funds and is responsible for assuring that the funds requested directly coincide with the immediate needs of the family as well as verifying that funds requested are in accordance with allowable expenses listed at the end of this document.

Protocol to Release Funds

CUA Case Manager (CM):

Whoever identifies the emergency if other than the CUA CM, for example the caregiver, child's or youth's teacher, clergy, etc. starts the process by contacting the CUA CM.

- The CUA CM, after an assessment and before applying, must conclude either that the child or youth is at imminent risk of being placed and payment of the emergency expense will prevent immediate placement or an additional placement, or the child's or youth's goal is reunification or other permanency and the payment of the emergency expense will accelerate attaining the goal and there are no other funding sources.
- The CUA must: identify specifically which other funding sources were sought and exhausted, conclude that payment of the expense is necessary to achieve the goal of the Single Case Plan (SCP) and that it is unlikely that the need for payment of the expense will reoccur in the future.
- The CUA CM must get an accurate and thorough picture of the family's income and expenses and detail that on the request form so that the expenses can be justified; and will sustain the household.
- The CUA must document an explanation as to why/how an arrearage or bill delinquency occurred and how the household will be sustainable after an arrearage is reduced or paid off.

Supportive Documentation of the Emergency Expense:

The caregiver must show verification of the expense requested. If a bill from a vendor is not directed to the caregiver of the children or youth, or to the child's or youth's expense, then the application needs to explain the relationship of the person identified on the documented bill. For example, if the bill is for past due electricity and a cancellation notice is to the person with whom the caregiver is living, there is sufficient connection. For repairs, the documentation needs to show who is responsible for payment and if different than the caregiver, how the person is connected to the caregiver.

CUA Supervisor:

The CUA Supervisor must review the request and confirm that the application is complete and that supporting documentation is both accurate and present. Once approved, the CUA Supervisor forwards the request to the CUA Case Management Director for overseeing the fund.

The CUA Case Management Directors:

Review the application for completeness, verify that funds requested are in accordance with allowable expense list, approve and sign the request; and forward via email attachments the complete application with all supporting documentation to PHMC for processing.

PHMC Payment to Vendor:

- All payments by PHMC under this fund are made to a vendor and not to the caregiver or CUA staff.
- Payments will be made according to the Allowable Expenditures and Acceptable Verification list attached.
- Payments are distributed three ways by noting the following codes on page two of the application:
 - **MV (Mail to Vendor)** - request payments mailed directly to the vendor.
 - No payments to utilities will be mailed to the vendor as the checks, which were attached to bills in the past, have been incorrectly applied to the accounts or cashed and not applied to an account.
 - No payments for repair work will be mailed to the vendor. Requests for repairs will be cut in two checks for the total amount. The first check is the deposit and should be given to the vendor in order to start work. The second check is to be held by the CUA Case Management Director and released to be given to the vendor upon confirmation of the work quoted being completed.
 - **MD (Mail to CUA Case Management Director)** - request payments mailed directly to the Director.
 - **PU (Pickup at PHMC)** - request payment to be picked up at PHMC (to be used on a limited basis in extreme emergencies).

All checks to landlords must be either picked up at PHMC or mailed by PHMC to the CUA CM Director to be hand delivered to the landlord in order to confirm that the client still resides (or plans to reside) at the residence. PHMC will make arrangements regarding the pickup of checks.

Clarifications:

When clarification is needed for an application, this clarification must be received by PHMC within 30 days of the original application submission date or application may be made inactive and a new application must be submitted.

PLEASE NOTE: CUA staff that complete applications are not to give out PHMC Emergency Fund staff contact information to the vendors or clients. All communication regarding applications must be between the CUA CM Directors and the PHMC Emergency Fund staff.

Fund Outcome Measures:

Tracking the outcomes is important to ensure that the funds are used strategically. DHS, through PHMC, will follow up on selected applications for use of the funds. **Each Director responsible for approving the use of the fund will be expected to know the outcomes and why the application achieved or did not achieve its intended purpose.**

DHS, through PHMC as the administrator of the fund, will track the following performance measures to see whether the payment under this fund achieves the intended purpose:

- Within 3 months of payment of the fund:
 - Whether the children or youth went into out-of-home placement.
 - Whether the children or youth remained in placement.
 - If the case was closed.
 - If the identified child or youth was adopted or had the caregiver assume legal custody.

Please email and attach all completed applications and required documentation to the following:

- Rich Kirschner: email: richk@phmc.org
- Roslyn Gallmon: email: roslyn@phmc.org
- John Bowen: email: jbowen@phmc.org

Checks may be picked up at:
DHS CUA Placement Prevention and Family Reunification Funds
Public Health Management Corporation
Centre Square East
1500 Market Street, Suite 1500
Philadelphia, PA 19102

**These Protocols will be reviewed and revised if necessary.
If the fund does not achieve its intended purpose, it will be discontinued.**