
BUFFALO AND ERIE COUNTY WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD, INC.
Erie County Healthcare Careers (EHC)
Individual Training Account and Supportive Services Policy

**ALL TRAINING ASSISTANCE AND SUPPORT UNDER THIS POLICY
ARE SUBJECT TO FUNDING AVAILABILITY.**

INDIVIDUAL TRAINING ACCOUNTS (ITAs)

PURPOSE OF AN ITA

The purpose of an ITA is to cover the customer's cost of training and training related expenses directly linked to a demand occupation. A Demand Occupation is any occupation listed on the Buffalo and Erie County Workforce Investment Board's (WIB) List of Demand Occupations current at the time of the ITA application. Training supported by an ITA must lead to employment of 30 hours or more per week.

A Demand Occupation List exception may be considered when an occupation aligns with targeted industry sectors of the Regional Economic Development Council. This exception may be granted on the approval of the WIB Executive Director.

ITA FUNDING FOR TUITION AND FEES

For individuals eligible for an ITA under the EHC grant, up to \$6,000 may be provided to fund tuition and fees for programs less than 2 year duration, and up to \$10,000 for programs of 2 years duration. This cap is on a per participant basis and includes any previous funding awarded from the EHC program. An exception can be granted to override this cap only with the express consent given by the WIB Executive Director.

AVAILABILITY OF OTHER RESOURCES

Individuals must apply for any available financial aid before being considered for ITA sponsorship. Availability of other sources of training grants to pay for training costs, such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and State funded training funds, must be considered so that these funds supplement other sources of training grants. Thus, if a course/program qualifies for financial aid the individual must apply and be in receipt of financial aid or a financial aid interpretation letter before an ITA can be authorized.

ELIGIBILITY

In order to be eligible for an ITA under the EHC program, an individual must:

- (1) Be an Erie County resident, and
- (2) Have a high school diploma or equivalent, and
- (3) Have a current hourly wage of less than the self-sufficiency wage established by the WIB, currently \$25.00 per hour or \$875 per week,
- (4) Meet individual program requirements.

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TRAINING RELATED EXPENSES

Appropriate expenses such as books, lab fees, tools, uniforms, and exam and license fees will be covered by this policy. However, these necessary expenses must be listed in the provider's approved course offering on the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) under the category, Additional Cost.

- (1) Training related expenses may be funded in an amount up to \$1,000 per participant. This coverage is separate from the ITA tuition limit of \$6,000, and
- (2) Any training related expenses that exceed \$1,000 will be the responsibility of the participant.

DEFAULTED LOANS

A customer may not be in default of a student loan or must be actively repaying the loan.

ELIGIBLE TRAINING PROGRAMS/COURSES

An ITA will cover costs associated with occupational training leading to a certificate, license, or completion of a two-year degree leading to employment in a Demand Occupation. An ITA may also be used to cover the costs of completing a Bachelor's degree (two-year maximum), leading to employment in a Demand Occupation.

DENIAL OF TRAINING SERVICES

Training Services will not be provided through an ITA if the following occurs:

- (1) The customer lacks the prerequisites for the course, or
- (2) The customer may not be able to cover anticipated training costs and training related expenses in excess of the cap limit, or
- (3) Training Services are not directly linked to occupations that are in demand.

CUSTOMERS TAKING MORE THAN ONE APPROVED COURSE

A customer may take a number of related training courses as long as these courses are part of the original career path leading to unsubsidized employment, and the total cost does not exceed the maximum ITA training cap.

TRAINING FOR AN EMPLOYEE OF AN APPROVED TRAINING PROVIDER

An employee of an approved training provider may seek EHC training services as long as the employee is EHC eligible and another training provider provides the training.

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CUSTOMER RESPONSIBILITIES

Customers must provide all required documentation, including supporting documentation from the 1-9 form, as proof of identification and eligibility for EHC services and employment.

SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

CHILDCARE

It is the policy of the Buffalo and Erie County Workforce Investment Board, Inc. (WIB) to assist in the provision of childcare for programs funded under the EHC grant. The provision of childcare assistance is designed to ensure that the parent(s) / legal guardian(s) of children are able to participate in health related classroom training programs and transition into employment. Further, this policy is intended to allow the parent(s) / guardian(s) to participate in health related classroom training and transition into employment with the confidence that their child(ren) are being cared for in a safe and wholesome environment.

Eligibility for Childcare Assistance

To be eligible for consideration of childcare assistance under EHC a participant must:

- (1) Have a current hourly wage of less than the self-sufficiency wage established by the WIB. The current self-sufficiency wage is \$25.00 per hour, and
- (2) Be enrolled and actively engaged in EHC sponsored, WIB approved, classroom training program where the scheduled duration of the entire training program is more than 24 hours, or

Be employed full time as a new hire in training related employment as a result of an EHC sponsored training program.

Childcare Cap Amount

The maximum amount per participant for childcare assistance will be \$12,000. On a case-by case basis, and at the discretion of the WIB Executive Director, additional funding, up to \$2,500 may be provided where evidence demonstrates that the participant is at or near completion of a training program, and, without additional childcare assistance, the completion of training would be jeopardized.

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Childcare Assistance Duration

Childcare assistance shall be given to those eligible individuals who are enrolled in EHC sponsored, WIB approved, classroom training for the duration of the program, and, if needed, for a period of 30 days after the individual has been hired, fulltime, into training related employment, provided that the placement is within 6 months of the completion of the program.

Definitions

The following definitions apply to this policy:

- (1) Full time employment shall be employment of at least 30 hours per week.
- (2) A child is defined as an individual age 12 years or younger. However, in the event that a special need is identified and documented, this definition may be waived by the WIB.
- (3) A childcare provider is defined as a New York State regulated legal provider of childcare services eligible for childcare reimbursement through the Erie County Department of Social Services (ECDSS).

General Provision for Childcare Assistance

Childcare assistance will be provided through a childcare provider only for a child(ren) for whom a participant is legally responsible; and only when a participant can establish need for childcare assistance. Need for childcare assistance is established when:

- (1) the parent(s) legal guardian(s) can demonstrate that there is no other responsible family member or adult in the household available to care for the child(ren) during the hours of the program; or
- (2) it can be documented that special needs of the child(ren) cannot be met by a responsible adult in the household.

Once a participant's eligibility and need for childcare assistance are established, the career counselor must contact the EHC Childcare Coordinator. The EHC Childcare Coordinator is responsible for the execution of childcare assistance. The career counselor staff shall notify the EHC Childcare Coordinator immediately in the event the participant does not begin training, stops attending training or is terminated from training.

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Approved / Regulated Childcare Providers

Staff should use the regulated/contracted childcare providers that the WIB can approve for services for our customers. These providers are State regulated and also under contract with ECDSS.

TRANSPORTATION

Individuals enrolled in EHC sponsored, WIB approved, classroom training programs are eligible for a transportation allowance in one of the following forms: for public transportation, a Niagara Frontier Transit Authority (NFTA) monthly bus pass; for private transportation, a bi-weekly check in the amount of \$5.00 per scheduled training day actually attended in the previous bi-weekly period. Documentation is required for transportation reimbursement. Instructor signed, participant timesheets, are proof of the participant's attendance.

If requested within 6 months of the completion of training and documented to be financially necessary, an individual may be provided a transportation allowance in one of the following forms, 1) an NFTA one-month bus pass, OR, 2) for private transportation, for a period of 4 weeks, a bi-weekly check in the amount of \$5.00 per day actually worked in the previous bi-weekly period, when the participant is first placed and engaged in unsubsidized employment in a training-related occupation consisting of 30 or more hours per week. Maximum bi-weekly check is \$50. The maximum amount overall for the 4-week period of employment is \$100.

EMERGENCY FUNDS

Emergency Funds are funds for services that address the needs individuals may have that aren't covered by other means. These services may include, but are not limited to: assistance with obtaining a driver's license, car repairs, a one-time car insurance payment, or a one-time rental payment. Emergency funds are limited to the EHC Grant and are only available when there are ample funds in the grant for this activity.

Eligibility

Individual must be an enrollee of an EHC sponsored, WIB approved, classroom training program.

Policy

Emergency Funds must be necessary for a given participant and be beyond his/her ability to pay. Emergency Funds are not entitlements and shall be approved by the WIB Executive Director, on

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an as needed basis. Documented financial assessment, individual circumstances, the absence of other resources and funding limits will be used to determine the approval for the participant.

Emergency Funds will be awarded on a one-time basis for a maximum of \$500.

Housing

Rental payments may be paid to a participant's landlord for one month when such payment is needed to prevent homelessness. Payment shall not include late fees. In instances when housing assistance is provided, there must be a reasonable expectation that assistance will resolve the situation; for example, if rent is paid for one month, there must be a reasonable expectation that the participant will obtain resources to pay rent for the following months. Back up documentation must include a copy of the lease, phone verification of the name on the lease by the landlord, the name and contact information of the landlord and the amount of rent and the date rent is due. When a lease is not involved, a verified letter from the landlord may suffice.

Payment

Emergency Funds will not be paid directly to the participant. All payments will be made directly to the vendor/payee upon receiving an invoice on letterhead stating the exact amount to be paid.

LICENSE EXAMINATION RETAKE

The cost of retaking a licensing/certification exam will be covered by EHC as long as the participant is in good standing, based on the recommendation of the career counselor and the school. The retake must take place within 6 months of the initial examination as long as EHC funds are available.