

**Community Support Services**

**150 Cross Street**

**Akron, OH 44311**

**Representative Payee Program Handbook**



## Statement of Confidentiality

This handbook is developed to ensure that all parties involved have a complete understanding of the rights and needs of each other.

Community Support Services Representative Payee Program staff is required to keep all client information confidential. Disclosure of information to any professional or agency is not to be divulged without proper written authorization from the Individual for whom the agency is serving as their Representative Payee. The exceptions will be the individual's community support worker and/or supervisor, Social Security Administration personnel and staff from the Department of Job and Family services. The discussion of any confidential information by the Representative Payee program staff will be done only in performance of job duties. No information will be discussed outside of the payee office unless within the performance of their required duties.

## What is a Representative Payee?

As defined by the Social Security Administration, Community Support Services receives Social Security Disability (SSD) and/ or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments for individuals whom the Social Security Administration has considered to not be capable of managing or directing someone to manage their funds. **The payee's main responsibility is to meet an individual's basic current needs of food, clothing, shelter and medical care. Once the current needs are met the representative payee may save any leftover funds for future needs of the individual.**

In addition to the above responsibilities, the representative payee's duties include:

- Report any changes or events which could affect the beneficiary's eligibility – **CRS**
- Keep written records of all funds received and how they were spent and/or saved – **payee staff**
- Distribute funds by cash, check/debit card
- Provide benefit information to social services agencies or medical facilities that serves the beneficiary – **CRS**
- Complete written accounting reports on the use of the funds – **payee staff**
- Return any payments the beneficiary is not entitled to – **payee staff**

- Notify the Social Security Administration if a beneficiary's condition improves to a point where he/she no longer needs a payee – **CRS**

**The goal of Community Support Services Representative Payee Program is to assist in reducing the financial self-mismanagement of funds and/or assist the individual to manage their own funds and become their own payee.**

### **Eligibility Requirements**

Individuals participating in the payee program are to be actively involved with Community Support Services receiving case management services and be a resident of Summit County. Exceptions to the eligibility requirements may be considered as appropriate.

### **Rules and Regulations**

These rules and regulations are designed to be beneficial to all individuals involved with the payee program. They are not in any way intended to infringe upon the rights of any of the involved parties. Individuals will still have the right to speak with the agency's Client's Rights Officer.

### **Payee Staff Responsibilities**

Community Support Services Payee Program staff responsibilities may include but are not limited to:

- using individual's benefits for current and/or any future needs;
- treating individuals with courtesy and respect;
- notifying the Social Security Administration of any major changes within the individual's circumstances;
- alerting the individual's CRS of any major changes in the individual's behavior, income and/or bills;
- provide benefit information to social service agencies or medical facilities that provide services to the individual;
- pay bills in a timely fashion so they do not accrue late charges;
- notify the Social Security Administration when an individual receiving SSI funds are over the \$2,000.00 limit.
- CRS / BCRS to notify Social Security Administration when an individual is incarcerated or in a state hospital for a full calendar month.

### **Individual Participant Expectations**

Generally speaking, payee program participants will deal directly with their assigned case manager/CRS and/or the Benefits Specialist regarding financial issues. Should there remain issues that cannot be resolved at that level, other agency staff members may be contacted to resolve these issues. These staff members include:

1. The assigned case manager's supervisor
2. The on-call supervisor / Director
3. The Client Rights Advocate

These staff members should be contacted in the order listed above. Only one of the above should be involved to avoid any duplication or confusion regarding the concern.

Individuals utilizing the payee program are expected to remain calm and in control when dealing with agency employees regarding their accounts. If an individual uses profane language or becomes threatening to others, the standard agency procedures regarding this type of behavior will be enforced. These procedures include asking the individual to leave the agency campus for the day and may involve agency security officers.

Individuals who have severe or continued outbursts may be terminated from the program. It would be up to the individual and the Social Security Administration to locate another representative payee. The remaining funds would be returned to the Social Security Administration for distribution.

The following points are examples of behaviors that will not be tolerated:

- Verbal/physical threats
- Harassing or repeated telephone calls/messages
- Frequently reporting of lost checks/debit cards
- Taking another individual's check
- Bringing weapons of any kind on to the agency premises
- Throwing objects at staff

Individuals are reminded to:

- Promptly notify their CRS of major life changes (i.e., moving, obtaining/ending employment, change in their marital status and opening a bank account, etc.)

- Moves should be coordinated with the assigned CRS. The Payee Program should ideally be notified 30-days before the change in residence.
- Subletting from individuals who reside in subsidized housing is fraud, therefore the Payee Department cannot be party to this type of arrangement.

### **Monthly Budgets**

Individuals new to the Representative Payee program will have their stipend (cash, check or debit card) based on a 5-week month. This will ensure these individuals will have funds available throughout the month.

### **Payee Forms**

**Payee forms must have two (2) signatures prior to submission to the Payee Office.** Failure to have all signatures will result in the form being sent back to the CRS. In extenuating circumstances an individual's signature will be obtained ASAP and attached to the original form. The monthly budget should include all expenses the individual's account will be paying. All bills are to be sent to the agency's address with the exception of water bills. Having bills sent to the agency is a more effective and efficient method of paying those bills. The **Rental Agreement Form/Lease** is required to pay the individual's rent.

The **Client Payment Request Form (Green Sheet)** is used for other expenses not covered on the Budget Form or being purchased with an agency credit card (see Blue Sheet). An individual can receive a green sheet check once a month up to/and no more than one hundred dollars (\$100.00). Request for more than \$100.00 will be based on case by case basis and will require additional documentation.

Green sheet requests for the holidays should be submitted before December 15<sup>th</sup> to allow for processing. The amount to be requested depends upon each individual's account with a maximum amount of \$400.00.

### **Credit Card Purchase Requests (Blue Sheet)**

The agency's credit card can be used for the following reasons: large purchases (i.e. TV, furniture, etc.) or for specific purchases due to clinical reasons.

The Payee Program is required to provide receipts to the Social Security Administration upon request for any funds coming out of an individual's account. The exception is the individual's weekly spending checks/debit cards allocation. The individual will initial all receipts or confirmation numbers and sign the **blue sheet**.

#### **Petty Cash Request**

In case of an emergency requiring additional funds, individuals are permitted to utilize petty cash in the maximum of thirty dollars (\$30.00). These petty cash dollars will be deducted from the individual's payee account.

Individuals with multiple monthly petty cash requests are encouraged to meet with their CRS to review their budgets.

#### **Banking of Checks**

The Payee Program will not hold an individual's weekly stipend checks. One check will be held at the payee office when the individual is unable to pick-up their check. All other checks will be re-deposited in the individual's account.

#### **Others Individuals Picking Up Checks**

A CRS can request to pick up an individual's check, but must give the check to the individual during the week it was picked up. The CRS cannot hold a check for multiple weeks.

#### **Living Expenses**

The Payee Program understands there are situations where individuals are living with family members. The BCRS will place on the individual's budget their portion of groceries and/or utility bills. **The family will need to keep all receipts for those expenses and submit those receipts to the Payee Office prior to receiving the next month's check.** Failure to turn in those receipts will delay or prevent the family from receiving an additional check for groceries/and utilities bills

#### **Emergency Checks**

Generally, the Payee Program does not produce emergency checks. However, checks would be approved on a case by case basis.

### **Stop Payments on Checks**

If the Payee Program has to place a stop payment on a check no action can take place for ten (10) business days from the date of the check. The current bank fee will be charged to the individual's account unless the reason for placing the **stop payment** is due to a Payee Program error.

### **Borrowing from Next Month's Check**

At no time can an individual borrow from their next month's SSI or SSDI check.

### **Service for Fee Program**

Community Support Services Representative Payee Program is an approved Fee for Service Program as permitted by the Social Security Administration. This means that the payee program can charge each individual a monthly service fee.

### **Things Payee/CRS Staff Cannot Do**

- Pay another individual's bill using another individual's funds, with the exception of those individuals living together and combining benefits and expenses.
- Write checks from one individual's account to another individual's account for items purchased, etc.
- Make payments without accompanying documentation whether it is an actual bill or a Client Payment Request.

### **Individuals over Medicaid & SSI Limits**

Community Support Service's Representative Payee Program notifies the appropriate staff monthly for all individuals who are over the \$1,500.00 limit, established by the Department of Job and Family Services (**Medicaid**). Individuals who are over the limit can lose their Medicaid benefits if they have a hearing or re-determination and their account is over the limit.

For individuals on SSI: they cannot be over the \$2,000.00 limit at the end of the current month. Payee staff is required to notify Social Security Administration. The individual may have their next month (s) check stopped until they are below the \$2,000.00 limit.

### **Returning Funds to Social Security**

Community Support Service's policy about returning conserved funds to the Social Security Administration follows the regulation established by Social Security. When the Payee Program is no longer the representative payee, those conserved funds remaining in the individual's account will be returned to the Social Security Administration. **Those funds will not be given to the individual or sent to the individual's new payee.**

### **Pre-Need Burial Plans/Life Insurance**

It is in the individual's best interest to have either a life insurance plan or a pre-need burial plan (irrevocable). Both are ideal ways of ensuring an individual will be properly buried upon death and assists in keeping the individual's account below the Medicaid and SSI levels. A pre-need burial can be established with an initial up front cost and a monthly expense. Pre-Need Burial Plans usually can be added to after first being established, especially if the individual's account starts to build up where it would jeopardize their Medicaid or SSI benefits. Individuals on SSDI can equally benefit from having a Life Insurance Plan or a Pre-Need Burial Plan. They are usually not subjected to saving limits.

### **Individuals Who Pass Away**

Upon the death of an individual their payee account becomes part of their estate. This means it becomes frozen in accordance with Summit County Probate laws. No funds from their account can be accessed with the exception of recent SSI/SSDI checks sent by the Social Security Administration following their death. These funds must be returned to the Social Security Administration if the individual was not entitled to them. If the individual has relatives, those individuals will have to petition the court to obtain those funds. The balance of the account can only be accessed when the Payee Program receives proper documentation from the estate's legal representation as identified by the Probate court. Individuals without any known legal representatives of their estate will have their funds transferred within 90 days to a holding account in preparation to surrender to the state's Unclaimed Funds Division.

### **Becoming Own Payee**

Community Support Services Payee Program supports efforts by individuals to become their own payee. This follows along with the agency's support of the Recovery Model. In order for this to occur, an individual will work with their CRS and/or Benefits Specialist to develop an Individual Exit Plan within the Individual Service Plan (ISP) to get off the Payee Program. This ISP will outline in detail what is needed for the individual to become their own payee, including a detailed budget of what expenses the individual will be paying. The details of the plan are to include a specific timeline up to three (3) months of what the individual's responsibilities will be in seeking to become their own payee. The individual will gradually be given specific expenses and the necessary funds to meet those bills. The individual must return **all receipts** to their CRS following payment of those expenses, and the CRS will forward them to the Payee Program.

If successful within the first month the individual will be given additional expenses and funds to manage with the same requirements. If the individual has successfully met all procedures by the third month, the CRS/Benefit Specialist should submit to the Social Security Administration a doctor's statement indicating the individual is capable of managing his/her own funds. If the individual at any stage fails to submit any receipts for items entrusted to them the plan will become null and void and the individual will return back to their previous budget.