



George E. Pataki
Governor

NEW YORK STATE
OFFICE OF CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES
52 WASHINGTON STREET
RENSSELAER, NY 12144

John A. Johnson
Commissioner

Local Commissioners Memorandum

Transmittal:	05-OCFS-LCM-01
To:	Local District Commissioners
Issuing Division/Office:	Strategic Planning and Policy Development
Date:	January 27, 2005
Subject:	Federal Fiscal Year 2004 - 2005 Education and Training Voucher Program
Contact Person(s):	See Section VI
Attachments:	Sample Revenue Offset Letter Education and Training Voucher Program
Attachment Available On – Line:	Yes

I. Purpose

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide guidance to social services districts on the Federal Fiscal Year 2004-2005 Education and Training Voucher (ETV) program. This program will help youth aging out of foster care make the transition to self-sufficiency and receive the education, training and services necessary to obtain employment. For Federal Fiscal Year 2004-2005, \$3,454,364 is available for this purpose. The ETV funds must be fully liquidated (spent and claimed to the federal government) by September 30, 2005. This LCM also describes the selection criteria for awarding Federal Fiscal Year 2004-05 ETV program funds and the funding requirements.

The Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) is in the process of negotiating a contract with the Orphan Foundation of America (OFA) to administer and serve as New York State's fiscal agent for the ETV program for Federal Fiscal Year 2004-2005. OFA has 12 years' experience administering college and vocational scholarships for foster youth. It has information on, and access to, other scholarship programs for foster youth. OFA has been working with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration on Children, Youth and Families on the ETV program. OFA already administers the ETV program for several other states and has automated systems to support administration of the program. Among other things, OFA has automated the application forms and record retention for audit purposes. OFA also has a national network of hundreds of volunteers who provide adjunct services such as mentoring, tutoring, and internships to scholarship recipients.

II. Background

The Promoting Safe and Stable Families Amendments of 2001, Public Law 107-133, was signed into law on January 17, 2002. Title II, Section 201, of the Amendments, entitled "Education and Training Vouchers for Youths Aging Out of Foster Care," amended section 477 of Title IV-E of the Social Security Act, targeting additional resources specifically to meet the education and training needs of youth aging out of foster care. Under this program, eligible youth may receive up to \$5,000 per year to attend a post-secondary education or vocational training program. The federal law specifies that youth eligible for vouchers under this program include foster care youth and former foster care youth who have not yet attained the age of 21 years who are eligible for services under the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (CFCIP), and youth adopted from foster care after the age of 16. A youth participating in the ETV program when he or she attains 21 years of age may remain eligible until the youth attains 23 years of age.

For Federal Fiscal Year 2003-2004, \$3,471,874 was available to New York State for this purpose. Approximately 800 youth statewide were awarded funds. Priority was given to youth who were 20 years of age and would be 21 by September 30, 2004, and who were enrolled in and attending a post-secondary education or vocational training program and making satisfactory progress toward completion of that program.

III. Funding Requirements

For Federal Fiscal Year 2004-2005, New York received a federal allocation of \$3,454,364 for the ETV program. Of this amount, \$3,143,471 will be distributed in vouchers; the remainder will be paid to OFA for program supports for youth and program administration.

Federal law establishes a 20 percent match requirement in order to access ETV funds. Last year, districts were subject to the full match requirement to access the ETV funds. When the contract with OFA is complete, OFA is willing to contribute a portion of the required match. As a result of the OFA contribution, the local district match requirement is anticipated to be 12.5 percent, which is substantially less than the 20 percent required last year from districts with youth participating in the ETV program.

OCFS requires a revenue intercept for a district's match for the total amount awarded for each voucher. The district match must be a cash match. Attached is a form letter that, when submitted to OCFS will authorize the intercept of funds otherwise due to the district to finance the match requirements for each participating district. Districts interested in supporting eligible youths' participation in continuing their education/training beyond high school must complete and send this form to OCFS by February 15. The form requires a district to specify the maximum total contribution available from the district to match all of the ETV vouchers it is willing to support. Since the district's cash contribution is 12.5 percent of the total voucher, the district must provide \$625(12.5 percent of \$5,000) for each \$5,000 voucher, the maximum amount allowable for any eligible youth.

IV. Application and Selection of Program Participants

Youth eligible for vouchers under this program are foster care youth and former foster care youth, including youth placed in OCFS custody, who have not yet attained the age of 21 years who are eligible for services under the CFCIP, and youth adopted from foster care after the age of 16. A youth participating in the ETV program when he or she attains 21 years of age may remain eligible until the youth attains 23 years of age.

The following priorities will be applied in the initial selection of eligible participants for the ETV program for Federal Fiscal Year 2004-2005:

- First priority will be given to youth over the age of 21 who had received an ETV award in FFY 2003-2004 who continue to be enrolled in and attending a post-secondary educational or vocational training program and are making satisfactory progress toward completion of that program.
- Second priority will be given to any other youth who received an ETV award in FFY 2003.
- Third priority will be given to youth who are 20 years of age and will be 21 by September 30, 2005 and who are enrolled in and attending a post-secondary educational or vocational training program and are making satisfactory progress toward completion of that program. These youth would not have received an ETV award in FFY 2003-2004.
- Fourth priority will be given to youth who are 17, 18, 19 and 20 years of age and who are enrolled in and attending a post-secondary education or vocational training program and making satisfactory progress toward completion of that program

Local districts must identify eligible youth and submit names to OFA by February 15, 2005, which will want applications completed through its on-line application, as well as a list of youth identified by the districts as eligible recipients of a voucher. This is in addition to submission of an intercept letter. Either the districts or the youth will be able to complete the ETV application on-line at the OFA web site <http://www.orphan.org> . The names on the completed on-line applications must be consistent with the list submitted to OFA. After vouchers have been awarded for those names submitted by February 15, and if additional funds are available, applications will be accepted on a rolling basis and will not be subject to the priorities.

The on-line application will require demographic information such as the name of the college or vocational training program the youth plan and/or is currently enrolled in and/or attending, which priority is applicable to the youth, and the amount of funds being requested for costs of attending a post-secondary education or vocational training program. OFA will use the information provided on the application to determine eligibility and construct an ETV award for the student. The funds requested for such applicant must not exceed the \$5,000 or the total cost of participation net of any other available resource, whichever is less. The \$5,000 amount includes federal funds and the match amount provided by OFA and the applicable district.

OFA will work with participating local districts to establish eligibility of applicants for funding. To avoid prolonging the approval process, local districts must respond to OFA quickly when asked whether a youth qualifies for funding (i.e., is the youth a foster child or former foster child who has not yet attained the age of 21 years, a youth adopted from foster care after the age of 16 or a youth who received a voucher for FFY 03-04 through the ETV program). OCFS anticipates that demand for vouchers may exceed availability and quick turnaround of information will facilitate an eligible youth's acceptance prior to the exhaustion of funds.

When selected and receiving an ETV voucher, a youth must make satisfactory progress in the educational or vocational training program to remain eligible. A youth may be considered to be making satisfactory progress as long as the youth has not been suspended from the educational or vocational training program. This would include youth placed on academic probation who continue to be enrolled in and are attending their educational or vocational training program.

For selection of eligible youth to receive ETV benefits, any limitations the district wishes to impose on the availability of the vouchers must be consistent with the state criteria set forth above. For example, a district may limit vouchers to only youth in the first priority, with at least a specified grade point average. The local match would then be required for all eligible youth meeting those criteria for whom vouchers are available.

The number of names submitted to OFA on February 15 will be categorized by priority and availability of local match. Any funding remaining, after eligible youth for whom a district match is available within priority group one are served, will be used for vouchers for youth within priority group two for whom a district match is available. Similarly, any funding remaining, after eligible youth within priority group two are served, will be used for vouchers for youth with priority group three for whom a district match is available. If funding is insufficient to provide vouchers for an entire priority category, need for funding will determine the amount of the voucher. Applications will be accepted on an ongoing basis and, should funding be available after February 15, applicants for whom a district match is available will be awarded vouchers on a first come, first served basis.

V. Education and Training Voucher (ETV) Coordinator

Each social services district is required to identify a person within the district to serve as the coordinator of the district's ETV program. The name and phone number of the ETV coordinator must be submitted to the OCFS Regional Office assigned to the district by February 15, 2005.

OFA will coordinate efforts with a district's ETV coordinator regarding program applicants within the district's jurisdiction.

VI. Contact Information

Questions pertaining to the ETV program should be directed to the appropriate Regional Office, Division of Development and Prevention Services:

BRO - Linda Brown (716) 847-3145
User ID: Linda.Brown@dfa.state.ny.us

RRO - Linda Kurtz (585) 238-8201
User ID: Linda.Kurtz@dfa.state.ny.us
SRO - Jack Klump (315) 423-1200
User ID: Jack.Klump@dfa.state.ny.us
ARO – Glenn Humphreys (518) 486-7078
User ID: Glenn.Humphreys@dfa.state.ny.us
YRO - Pat Sheehy (914) 377-2080
User ID: Patricia.Sheehy@dfa.state.ny.us
NYCRO - Fred Levitan (212) 383-1788
User ID: Fred.Levitan@dfa.state.ny.us

Nancy W. Martinez s/s

Issued By:

Name: Nancy W. Martinez

Title: Director

Division/Office: Strategic Planning and Policy Development

January 27, 2005

**Sample Revenue Offset Letter
Education and Training Voucher Program**

Rick Williams
Division of Development and Prevention Services
NYS Office of Children and Family Services
52 Washington Street N., Room 335
Renssealer, NY 12144

Dear Mr. Williams:

The _____ County Department of Social Services will commit 12.5% of each applicable approved Education and Training Voucher (ETV) Program award, up to a total amount of \$_____, to serve as its share of the ETV Program costs to be devoted to serving ETV eligible individuals.

This letter authorizes the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) to intercept Federal or State reimbursement from the RF-2 or 2A settlement otherwise due the _____ County Department of Social Services in the amount of 12.5% of each applicable approved ETV award, up to a total amount of \$_____ and to transfer that amount to the New York State Department of Office of Children and Family Services.

Sincerely

Local Commissioner