

OFFICE OF TEMPORARY AND DISABILITY ASSISTANCE

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| LOCAL COMMISSIONERS MEMORANDUM |
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OTDA-4037EL (Rev. 11/98)

Transmittal No: 99 LCM-26

Date: September 24, 1999

Division: Temporary Assistance

TO: Local District Commissioners

SUBJECT: Merit Incentive Awards Allocations

ATTACHMENTS: I: Merit Incentive Awards Allocations-Available on line
II: Merit Incentive Awards Plan-Available on line
III: Merit Incentive Awards Monthly Report-Available on
line

I. Introduction:

The purpose of this LCM is to advise districts of their Merit Incentive Awards program allocation (Attachment I).

The Merit Incentive Program (98 ADM-5, Merit Incentive Awards for Children in Receipt of TANF Funded Public Assistance) allows districts to provide periodic incentives for excellence in academic achievement or community service to children who are recipients of Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) funded public assistance in grades seven through nine.

The 1999-2000 State Budget appropriated \$1,000,000 in federal funds to be used by districts to provide Merit Incentive Awards to children in receipt of federally funded temporary assistance (TA)-Case Type 11 and Case Type 12. A long-term goal for all TA recipients is self-sufficiency. One step on the self-sufficiency ladder is education. Another is preserving and enhancing community pride through community involvement. Merit Incentive Awards are tools to help districts promote both.

Districts must determine what types of awards will be allowable under the plan. Items which may be used as awards include, but are not limited to: books, personal computers, software, calculators, items of need relating to specific disabilities not available through other resources, tuition for special programs or special educational/vocational camps not reimbursable under regular TA, museum or special event type admission costs, and other items/costs that are educationally related to preventing students from dropping out, or are determined fundamental in promoting academic success.

Districts must work cooperatively with local school districts and others within the community to make them aware that these incentives exist, and assign a contact person within the agency. Mechanisms for securing merchandise or services and providing payment for these incentives must be established locally. For example, districts may purchase gift certificates to local bookstores which are not redeemable for cash.

Districts must submit a plan (Attachment II) to this Office defining the specific terms and indicators they will use to measure academic achievement and community service. Plans should be structured for one year of funding and based on the allocation offered to the district. Examples of measures may include report cards, attendance reports, recommendations of teachers and administrative staff, recommendations from recognized volunteer groups within the community, local community service awards and specific recommendations from community leaders. Districts agreeing to accept their allocation must submit a plan to this office by November 1, 1999.

A district that chooses to accept these funds will need to meet the requirements listed in Section II of this release. Participating districts are also required to report to this Office on a monthly basis the number of students receiving the incentives, their grade levels, the type of incentive awarded and the reason for the award. The report will be made on the monthly report form (Attachment III) included in this release.

II. Plan Content

A district interested in accepting these funds to operate a Merit Incentive Awards program must submit a written plan (Attachment II) for review and approval by OTDA. Plans must be submitted in the prescribed format.

III. Evaluation

All plans will be evaluated by a group consisting of staff from the Division of Temporary Assistance and the Office of Budget Management with final approval from the Division of the Budget and must adhere to the additional allocation amount offered. The review will consider the merit of the plan based on content.

IV. Funding

There is \$1,000,000 available to provide Merit Incentive Awards program statewide. These funds are not available to supplant other funds or services available to districts from other funding streams or outside sources. There is no administrative funding tied to this program. Allocations reflect a ceiling amount up to which districts may actually claim Merit Incentive Awards.

It is anticipated that approved proposals will operate until June 30, 2000. Funding beyond this period is subject to annual appropriation by the State Legislature.

V. Fiscal Implications

Allocations shown on Attachment I are for the period July 1, 1999 through June 30, 2000. These funds will be available for use during the current State Fiscal Year (SFY), i. e. to pay for services through 6/30/00 with claims due by 8/15/00. Since these Federal funds must be appropriated for use by New York State and we operate on a one-year budget cycle, we cannot provide an absolute guarantee of continued funding beyond these dates. However, we fully expect that any unused amounts will again be reappropriated in the SFY 2000-01 budget, making them available for another year, thus enabling us to provide a full year's funding at 100% Federal share.

VI. Claiming Instructions

Merit Incentive Awards payments are authorized with pay type D6. These payments are claimed on the DSS-3922, "Financial Summary for Special Projects." The DSS-3922 should be labeled "Merit Inc 99-00." The composites identify these expenditures.

Line Instructions

Project Name

The project name should be "Merit Inc 99-00".

Month/Year

Enter the month and year in which these expenditures on the report were made.

Object of Expense

Under this column in Section C, "Other Expenses" line 12, you should print the program expense entitled "Incentive Award." Total expenditures should be entered on line 12 under the column headed "Total Expenditures." For SFY 1999-2000, all expenditures are 100% federally funded, and as such, the total expenditure amount should also be entered under the column headed "Federal Share."

Claims for reimbursement should be submitted on a monthly basis to:

Finance Unit
Bureau of Financial Services
Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance
40 North Pearl Street, 14th Floor
Albany, NY 12243

Any questions on the above should be addressed to Roland Levie, Regions 1-4, at 1-800-343-8859, ext. 4-7549, or Marvin Gold, Region 5, at (212)-383-1733.

VII. Submission of Plans

Merit Incentive Awards plans must be submitted to this Office no later than close of business November 1, 1999. Plans must be submitted to:

Maureen Kennedy-Ragule, Team Leader Region II
Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance
Section 11B
40 North Pearl Street
Albany, New York 12243
FAX (518) 474-5281

If you have questions concerning this release, please contact your Regional Team representative.

Patricia A. Stevens
Deputy Commissioner
Division of Temporary Assistance

Merit IncentivesDistrict

\$7,500

Allegany, Cattaraugus, Cayuga,
Chenango, Clinton, Columbia,
Cortland, Delaware, Essex, Franklin,
Fulton, Genesee, Greene, Hamilton,
Herkimer, Lewis, Livingston, Madison,
Montgomery, Ontario, Otsego, Putnam,
Saratoga, Schoharie, Schuyler,
Seneca, Sullivan, Tioga, Tompkins,
Warren, Washington, Wayne, Wyoming
and Yates.

\$20,000

Chemung, Dutchess, Jefferson, Oswego,
Rensselaer, Rockland, Schenectady,
St. Lawrence, Steuben, and Ulster.

\$35,000

Albany, Broome, Chautauqua, Erie,
Monroe, Nassau, Niagara, Oneida,
Onondaga, Orange, Orleans, Suffolk
and Westchester.

\$90,000

NYC.

Merit Incentive Awards Plan

_____ County is accepting \$_____ (restricted to allocation amount) of Merit Incentive Awards funds for the State Fiscal Year 1999-2000. These funds will be provided to children in grades seven through nine as an incentive for demonstrated academic excellence or community service. Awards will be made through the direct purchase of goods or services, not in the form of cash or a form that may be easily converted to cash. These awards to TANF funded recipients will not be considered as part of the regularly recurring public assistance grant.

_____ County will provide non-cash Merit Incentives which include:

- _____ Books
- _____ Personal Computers
- _____ Software
- _____ Calculators
- _____ Tuition for Special Educational Programs
- _____ Educational Camps
- _____ Admission to Special Events
- _____ Other (Must be approved by OTDA and the Division of Budget)

Specify:

The following terms and indicators will be used when determining academic achievement or community service:

The following community organizations will be actively participating in the development of this County's Merit Incentive Awards Program:

I agree to the terms and conditions of accepting funds to provide Merit Incentive Awards and agree to disburse these funds in accordance to the above plan, including disbursement of funds only to children eligible for TANF.

Signature of Local Social Services Commissioner _____

Date _____

Merit Incentive Awards Monthly Report

District _____

Month _____

Contact Person _____

Types of Awards:

- Books
- Personal Computers
- Software
- Calculators
- Tuition for Special Educational Programs
- Educational Camps
- Admission to Special Events
- Other (Specify) _____

Total Number of Awards _____

Grade Levels:

- Grade 7
- Grade 8
- Grade 9

Number of Students _____

Reason for Award

- Academic Excellence
- Community Service
- Other (Specify) _____

Send the monthly reports to:

Division of Temporary Assistance
 New York State
 Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance
 40 North Pearl Street
 Albany, NY 12243-0001
 FAX: (518)-474-9347
 Attention: Region Team II