

Get the Facts: HOPWA and COVID-19 Response



SUPPORTIVE SERVICES Q&A

A range of HOPWA Supportive Services activities may be implemented to provide assistance to HOPWA-eligible households experiencing challenges as a result of COVID-19. Responses may include, but are not limited to:

- Transportation and Gasoline
- Car Repairs
- Food/Meals/Nutrition
- Personal Protective Equipment
- Phones and Phone Cards
- Grocery Delivery/Grocery Cards

What types of transportation services are allowed through CARES Act funding? Can we provide gas cards or similar payment methods for client-owned vehicles?

Yes, you may provide transportation services for eligible households, including costs for privately-owned vehicle transportation when needed, to access medical care, supplies, and food or to commute to places of employment. This assistance can take the form of gas cards or similar pre-paid debit cards. **This activity may also be funded through a grantee's normal HOPWA allocation(s).**

Reminders/Cautions: When providing gas station or other cards to clients for gasoline purchases, put in place methods to restrict purchases to gas or other similar controls whenever possible. Use careful tracking methods for gas purchases and think through any policies needed on waste, fraud and abuse.

Can we assist HOPWA households with car repair costs?

Grantees may designate a portion of their **CARES Act award (and/or FY20 Formula award portion designated for COVID-19 response)** to supportive services, to include transportation.

- "Transportation" may also cover assisted household **car repairs when deemed necessary**. Grantees should have policies and procedures in place related to the use of HOPWA for this purpose, and documentation that repair of a personal vehicle is needed to ensure safe transportation as a response to COVID-19. **This activity may only be funded using CARES Act funds or FY20 funds designated for COVID-19 response.**
- Alternately, if an assisted household has paid for necessary car repairs and is therefore unable to afford rent, mortgage, or utilities, STRMU could be considered as part of a housing stability plan.

What types of nutrition services are allowed under CARES Act funding? Can we provide clients with grocery cards? What about meal delivery?

Grantees have a great deal of flexibility in the provision of nutrition services for eligible households. Food can be provided in forms such as food banks, groceries, food boxes, and meal or grocery deliveries. Methods used to provide needed food and groceries to households may include the use of grocery-store cards, food delivery by staff or contracting with food delivery services for meals or groceries, food/grocery pick-up sites for clients or other similar methods based on resources and local needs. **This activity may also be funded through a grantee's normal HOPWA allocation(s).**

Reminders/Cautions: When providing grocery store or other cards to clients for food purchases, put in place methods to restrict purchases to food items or other similar controls whenever possible. Use careful tracking methods for food purchases and think through any policies needed on waste, fraud and abuse.

Can HOPWA funds be used to purchase protective supplies (e.g., protective masks, hand sanitizer, and sterilizing wipes) for eligible clients? If so, would it be under support services?

Yes, CARES Act funding may be used for costs related to infection control measures such as cleaning and disinfectant supplies, gloves and other safety-related supplies for assisted households. Such supplies may be charged to supportive services. Additionally, these supplies may be charged to Operations when provided to staff and residents in facility-based housing.

The grantee should have policies in place that include key elements such as:

- 1) documentation of efforts to show that no alternate sources are available;
- 2) explanation of the specific types of supplies that are needed by clients;
- 3) description of who may receive such supplies and in what quantity; and
- 4) how the program should ensure that all clients identified as in need will be treated equally.

Note: Ryan White and ESG programs may cover these costs, as well. HOPWA programs should coordinate delivery of these items with other programs and funders in the community.

Will HOPWA allow purchase of cell phones, wireless service plans and/or phone cards for clients?

Yes, purchase of phones, plans and phone cards are allowed, with certain conditions:

- Purchase of cell phones, wireless service plans and/or phone cards for clients is allowed when needed to enable provision of **supportive services necessary to obtain and retain housing and ensure client safety and stability**.
- Phones must be **owned by the Project Sponsor**, may be **loaned to clients**, and must be returned to the sponsor when the emergency need no longer exists.
- **Prepaid or “disposable” phones** may be purchased for this purpose, but may only be loaned to clients.
- **Phone cards or minutes** may be purchased for clients who already own a phone when needed to access supportive services necessary to obtain and retain housing and ensure client safety and stability.
- When phones, phone cards or phone minutes are purchased for the purposes described above, the costs may be charged to **HOPWA Supportive Services**.

The contents of this fact sheet reflect guidance presented in a series of HOPWA/COVID-19 Q&A webinars available at: <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/hopwa/covid-19/#webinars>