**Division: Workforce Services Division**

**Category: Programs**

**Effective Date: 2/1/2024**

**Last Revised: 7/1/2023**

**Policy No.: 04-16**

Health and Economic Livelihood Partnership (HELP) Link

Policy

Background

The 2015 Montana Legislature established the Health and Economic Livelihood Partnership (HELP) Act though a collaborative effort between Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) and Montana Department of Labor and Industry (MTDLI). HELP-Link is the MTDLI-implemented workforce development program created to identify workforce development opportunities focusing on specific labor force needs within the state of Montana; reduce the number of people depending on social programs, including the HELP Act; provide grants to employers who hire and train HELP-Link clients; and increase the earning capacity, economic stability, and self-sufficiency of clients so they are able to purchase their own health insurance coverage.

Scope

This policy applies to all MTDLI HELP-Link contractors and MTDLI Central Office staff.

# Policy

* Eligible individuals must:
	+ Be willing and able to participate in workforce development activities designed to gain the skills and qualifications needed to fill Montana jobs;
	+ Be employment-eligible in Montana;
	+ Provide a social security number;
	+ Require HELP-Link assistance to begin education, training, or worksite learning; and
	+ Be unable to gain suitable employment without HELP-Link assistance.
* Eligible individuals must apply for and receive a financial aid determination prior to any training funds being expended at an accredited institution. All available funding must be applied toward the cost of training before using HELP-Link funding.

## Eligibility

* Only individuals currently receiving Medicaid Expansion medical coverage are eligible for HELP-Link workforce development activities. Eligibility for Medicaid Expansion medical coverage is determined by the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services.
* Eligibility must be verified and documented before workforce development activities may begin.

## Assessment

* Eligible individuals must be screened, assessed, and determined appropriate for workforce development services. Appropriateness is evaluated by:
* Identifying client’s skills, strengths, preferences, and potential challenges.
	+ Identifying needed services and assistance to support the individual obtaining the skill sets needed to meet current, local business needs.

## Duration

* Once an individual begins education, training, or worksite learning activities, participation in workforce development activities may continue for twelve (12) months (365 days), regardless of medical coverage status. Workforce development activities must be completed within this same twelve (12) month timeframe.

## Credential Achievement

Measurement of a client’s advancement in knowledge and abilities upon program completion. Training outcomes are categorized into five clusters and must be documented in the client’s file.

#### Licensure

* Verification by a government agency that a professional is able to perform a particular occupation in a particular location.

#### Certification

* Verification of an individual’s qualification or competence awarded only after passing the proper assessments administered by a recognized third-party with relevant authority.

#### Certificate/Micro-credential/Badge

* Verification of completion of a course or series of courses demonstrating understanding of course content at a specific period in time.

#### Skill Progression - Knowledge-Based Measure

* Progress in attaining technical or occupational skills as evidenced by trade-related benchmarks.

#### Skill Progression - Training Milestone

* Satisfactory or better progress report reflecting substantive skill development related to an established milestone.

## Closure

* Workforce development activities end when one of the following is reached:
	+ Education, training, or worksite learning is successfully complete and client obtains employment in their field of training;
	+ On day 366 of services; or
	+ Client opts to discontinue services, is unable to continue services, or has reached maximum benefit from services.

Supportive Services

Supportive services are payments for items and services reasonable and necessary to:

* Participate in education, training, or worksite learning; or
* Obtain suitable employment in the field of training with a Montana employer.

Supportive services:

* Must be paid directly to a vendor.
	+ Only mileage, meals, and lodging may be paid directly to the client and are only payable up to the contractor’s travel policy and may not exceed the IRS mileage rate or GSA per diem rate.
* Can only be expended when:
	+ A need or barrier exists;
	+ No other funding sources are available (including the client’s own resources);
	+ Expenses are incurred during participation in HELP-Link workforce development services;
	+ Approved prior to the client receiving or obtaining the item or service (backdated requests for items or services are not allowable);
	+ Accompanied by expense documentation (accepting a client’s self-attestation of expenses as documentation is not allowable); and
	+ Expenses adhere to 2 CFR Part 200 Uniform Guidance, as applicable.

Unallowable Supportive Services

* Health insurance payments;
* Out of state job search expenses, employment expenses or relocation;
* Payments/purchase for titled or deeded items;
* When recovery/refund of the expense is anticipated;
* Fines, restitution, probation/parole fees, or other court ordered obligations; and
* Business start-up costs.

# Administrative Requirements

* Feedback to and from both DPHHS and MTDLI to communicate client involvement in HELP-Link and services provided.
* Provide data and information to legislative subcommittees regarding program participation, expenditures, and outcomes.
* Provide data and reports to DPHHS as needed.

# Oversight and Evaluation

* Oversight and evaluation will be conducted by the HELP-Link program manager and/or designee(s).

# References

* 2021 Montana Legislature House Bill 614
* 2 CFR Part 200
* [Montana Code Annotated (MCA), 39-12](https://leg.mt.gov/bills/mca/title_0390/chapter_0120/part_0010/sections_index.html)
* Administrative Rules of Montana (ARM), 24.13