

SAL Q & A Updated January, 2015

Cluster Site

Question 1: Does the monthly maintenance payment come to the contractor?

Answer 1: The maintenance payment may be paid to the youth or another payee, other than a department employee, for the youth's care (e.g., payee could be the contractor).

Question 2: For cluster site, do you anticipate the contractor will be able to bill for daily contact under Service Code 2604 for one individual, one hour per day?

Answer 2: The contractor will be able to bill for units of service for children in cluster site settings using the proper billing codes the same as they do for scattered site settings. The number of units to be provided is determined by the referring worker according to individualized youth needs and authorized on the "Placement Agreement and Service Authorization for Supervised Apartment Living (SAL)" form.

Question 3: Can an agency have a SAL cluster site in which there are different program participants in the same building? We have a HUD funded program for 18-21 year olds in which 2 of these clients are living in the same building as 2 of our SAL clients (separate apartments). If we had an SAL cluster site contract could the people in the HUD funded apartments remain there or does it just include SAL?

Answer 3: No, the cluster site is intended for youth in SAL foster care. A SAL contractor can have up to 6 youth in a cluster site (if for example 2 of those spots were used for youth not in a SAL cluster site setting but funded from another program, that would cut off those spots for potential youth placed in SAL cluster site setting. However, youth placed in SAL scattered site could live in such a setting as described by the question.

Initial (Startup) Allowance

Question 1: Are the items in the SAL Start-Up funds something we can bill for, either before or during the month the maintenance is incurred, since the majority of the payment will likely be for rent?

Answer 1: The initial (startup) allowance is not "billed" for by the contractor. It is for the start-up expenses for the youth normally done at initial placement. The initial allowance requires SAM or designee authorization and is entered in FACS by the referring worker. See manual, 17-F, Page 10.

Question 2: Can the contractor be the payee for the start-up allowance and maintenance payments?

Answer 2: Yes, the referring worker can make the contractor the payee upon agreement by the youth's team. By in large, the contractor starts out as the payee and works with the youth regarding money management, with the intent of the youth eventually becoming the payee.

Question 3: Are there restrictions on what the startup money can be used for? Are there specific things that it cannot be used for?

Answer 3: The initial allowance is intended to be used for costs the youth may incur living in their own living arrangement. The initial allowance can be used for costs related to deposits required in addition to such things as groceries, furniture, dishes, cookware (basically necessary home making items) and personal hygiene items that may have been supplied by the previous placement (e.g., soaps, shampoos, etc). There is not a restriction on what the initial allowance can or can't be used for but the referring worker and contracted staff should ensure it is used

for what is considered startup costs for living on your own; in other words, it would not be for paying off a legal ticket for instance (or for other costs unrelated to living on one's own).

Question 4: If a client accesses their initial startup money moving into SAL cluster house are they then eligible for that same startup money again if they move from SAL cluster to scattered housing?

Answer 4: The initial startup allowance is a one-time thing regardless if the youth is going from cluster to scattered. The agency should always budget with the youth regarding the startup (and of course, maintenance payment); the youth can bank startup funds as needed for future startup costs (e.g., if the plan is for the youth to eventually go from a cluster site to a scattered site). (Added 2/15/12)

Monthly Maintenance/Stipend

Question 1: Is the monthly stipend that they youth receive considered income with regard to taxes?

Answer 1: The SAL payments to youth are not considered income for tax reporting purposes. They are considered income for figuring food assistance. (Added 7/25/12)

Question 2: If DHS is the provider for scattered site SAL services, can the monthly stipend go to the client?

Answer 2: In all cases, the monthly maintenance check can go to the youth; however the worker usually sets up a payee, at least for the first months to help the youth learn money management. The payee is typically the SAL provider however, since DHS is the provider of SAL services, in this case, yes, the youth can get the check, or the worker could set up a trusted payee. DHS cannot be the payee. (Added 11/20/12)

Question 3: We have a SAL participant that got arrested and whereabouts are unknown, what happens to the stipend/maintenance payment?

Answer 3: Any supervised apartment living maintenance funds remaining for children after all bills have been paid shall be returned to the Department's cashier's office when the child exits a supervised apartment living placement during a month due to:

- ◆ Running away, or
- ◆ Being placed in another type of foster care placement, or
- ◆ Being discharged from voluntary foster care placement when 18 years of age or older due to not following program requirements. (Added 1/28/14)

Billing

Question 1: Is there any compensation for the work done to get the participant into an apartment? As of now, there is none; we cannot start billing until they are actually in the apartment. Many times, we spend 20-30 hours looking for an apartment with the prospective participant.

Answer 1: Billing for SAL services cannot commence until the child is in the SAL placement. One of the SAL contract deliverables is that the SAL contractor will assist the youth (and their positive support system) in locating a living arrangement as outlined in the SAL required services definition and the youth's plan. In addition, most of the youth placed into SAL come directly from another foster care type placement; payment cannot be made for two placements nor can payment be made until the youth is placed in another foster care type setting.

Question 2: If we hold support groups for SAL participants, what are the requirements for the content of that group?

Answer 2: Support groups per se are not billable as SAL services; however, contractors certainly can have support groups for SAL participants. Additionally, there are community support groups in which to link children to, including the foster care youth council or more specific support groups, such as AA. SAL services that are billable are those defined in the SAL contract as “SAL Required Services” (Section 1.1, Special Terms Definitions) and throughout the SAL contract’s Deliverables (outlined in Section 1.3.1). Services can be provided on an individualized basis or in a group setting; billable SAL group services must be delivered to two or more children at a time.

Question 3: What date is to be used for contractor billing and reporting?

Answer 3: The service initiation date (the date the child is placed into the SAL program) is the date to determine billing and reporting requirements.

Question 4: If a kid has to go to detention for a period of time and then returns back to the house, are there “payback” procedures for rent that we need to follow specifically for you?

Answer 4: The only time that SAL maintenance funds remaining for a youth, after all bills have been paid, shall be returned to the Department is when the youth exits a supervised apartment living placement during a month due to:

- ◆ Running away, or
- ◆ Being placed in another type of foster care placement, or
- ◆ Being discharged from voluntary foster care placement when 18 years of age or older due to not following program requirements

Your questions depends a judge changes the youth’s court ordered placement. It is very possible that the youth is placed into detention for a few days and then returned back into their SAL setting, in which case funds would not be returned to the Department.

Question 5: Can transportation time be included as billable units of service?

Answer 5: No. Transportation time and/or transportation expenses are not to be included in billable units of service; this would include transporting youth or transportation costs related to the delivery of services. Be sure to subtract all transportation time and expenses from billable units of service and document this in the youth’s individual service plan. DHS contract specialists will be checking for this when doing SAL agency reviews. This is in 441 IAC 202.9(4) (administrative rules for the SAL program). (Added 3/5/12)

Question 6: It is clear that when a child is discharged from SAL the 2661 code is not paid for the day of discharge.

- How is this code handled when the child moves from the cluster setting to a scattered setting?
- Is the day of the change considered discharged from Cluster and therefore not paid?
- Or, because the youth is still in the SAL program the day of the move is allowed for the 2661 payment?

Answer 6: The 2661 is not paid for day of discharge, regardless if the youth leaves a cluster site setting to go into a scattered site setting. Based upon your question, the first day in the scattered site setting (the day of discharge from cluster site setting) would not have any payment related to 2661 (the \$16.44 per day would not be paid).

The contract is written in such a way that the SAL 2661 code is only regarding cluster site settings and payment is

up to the day of discharge, so it makes no difference if the youth ages out of a cluster site setting or stays in the overall SAL program but moves to a scattered site setting, the same policy applies, there would be no payment of 2661 for the day of discharge (this is due to the youth not being in the cluster site setting the whole day of discharge and therefore there is no payment for supervision for that day, just like group care. (Added 9/19/12)

Question 7: If a youth in a cluster site is placed in detention as a sanction, how should the 2661 cluster site staffing code be billed?

Answer 7: If a youth has a planned detention sanction and the SAL placement status does not change (will return to SAL placement after detention), the 2661 code would be billed at the daily rate NOT including the days the youth was in detention. This would mean that there is not a SAL placement discharge involved. Example: youth is gone for two days, the 8th and 9th, the contractor would not bill for those two days. (Added 10/18/12)

Eligibility

Question 1: Is there an eligibility requirement that says a child that enters into the SAL program would need to come from another foster care placement?

Answer 1: No, the youth does not have to have been in a foster care placement of a different type prior to entering SAL. Voluntary foster care after age 18 limits foster care placement type to family foster care or SAL. Re-entry into Voluntary Foster Care past age 18 allows only entry into SAL unless there is an exception to policy requested and approved.

202.3(3) Voluntary placement of a child aged 18 or older may be granted for six months at a time.

a. The department shall enter into the agreement only when the child:

- (1) Meets the definition of “child” in Iowa Code section 234.1,
- (2) Was in foster care or a state institution immediately before reaching the age of 18,
- (3) Has continued in foster care or a state institution since reaching the age of 18,
- (4) Has demonstrated a willingness to participate in case planning and to fulfill responsibilities as defined in the case permanency plan, and
- (5) Will be placed in foster family care or supervised apartment living in Iowa.

An exception to the requirement for continuous placement (3 above) may be made for a youth who leaves foster care at age 18 and voluntarily returns to supervised apartment living foster care before the youth’s twentieth birthday in order to complete high school or obtain a general equivalency diploma (GED).

Question 2: We have a question related to a young man/woman turning 18 and their DHS/JCS case closing on that day. Is there a way for that person to sign themselves into DHS, so that they may continue within the program to receive funding assistance to remain in the SAL home?

Current situation is a young man involved with JCS is turning 18 in a month or so and they are planning on closing his JCS case and he hasn’t completed his education as well, we don’t feel he has a supportive home/living environment that will help him be successful.

Answer 2: Regardless if the youth is a JCS or DHS case, the youth may stay in a foster care placement (in this case SAL placement) through the age of 19 as long as they are still working on completing high school or obtaining their GED. The youth would have to sign a voluntary placement agreement in order to stay in care which then needs to be approved by DHS.

Question 3: If a child leaves SAL against the recommendation of the referring worker, how does the referring worker notify us of reserved bed or cancelling that bed?

Answer 3: If a child leaves SAL (in this case, it sounds like the child runs away), then the agency notifies the referring worker immediately and the worker ends payments for SAL (maintenance and any future SAL services). A termination of service summary shall be sent to the department service worker responsible for the client within two weeks of service termination. The summary shall include the rationale for service termination and the impact of the service components on the client in relationship to the established goals and objectives. The provider should be made aware of recommendations, concerns, and changes in the youth's case plan through communication with the referring worker.

If the referring worker moves the youth to a more restrictive placement, the provider will be made aware via team meetings with the referring worker. There are no reserved bed days for SAL. (Added 2/15/12)

Question 4: If a child leaves SAL and then wants to return? Does he/she have to be discharged and then a re-admit process or does initial plan, authorization, continue?

Answer 4: If the child is under 18, then a court-order would be needed to end the foster care episode. If the child is over 18, there is a voluntary placement agreement signed by the child and court is not involved. If the child left and they were under 18, then either they were placed in a different type of placement or foster care ended and yes, if they re-entered under a new court order, this would be considered a new admit and therefore a new authorization would be needed from the referring worker and the provider would start anew, with a new plan. If the child leaves after 18, but is still eligible for foster care due to not having completed high school or their GED, then the process would start anew with DHS, including a new voluntary placement agreement. The provider would start "new" (new plan, etc. with the new plan taking into consideration what happened to either 1) make the youth have to re-enter foster care if under 18 or 2) why they wanted to come back if over 18 (e.g., what happened when they left after 18, what problems did they encounter, how to effectively transition out of foster care, how to make the most of foster care, the SAL program, work their goals, etc.). (Added 2/15/12)

Question 5: When a child leaves SAL after first of the month, do we as payee, keep entire stipend or is there payback to you? For example: if he leaves on 2nd of the month do we payback the entire month or keep his rent or how do we handle that?

Answer 5: If a child leaves anytime during a month, the maintenance payment belongs to the child; however, the provider should ensure that all bills due (inc. rent) are paid prior to the child receiving any of the money (if there is any leftover). (Added 2/15/12)

Question 6: Is there a process or exception if a client turns 18 and has completed school or obtained their GED but would still like to stay or move into SAL?

Answer 6: No. (Added 2/15/12)

Question 7: We have a referral for a young man who has completed his GED and turns 18 in March. Is he only allowed to remain in the program until he is 18 since he has completed his GED or is there a stipulation that allows for him to be in the house past his 18th birthday even though he completed his GED?

Answer 7: No, he cannot stay in SAL foster care past his 18th birthday because he has his GED. He is allowed to stay in foster care (which it sounds like he is moving to SAL foster care placement) until his 18th birthday due to him having his GED. If he did not have his GED or high school education completed, he could stay on through a voluntary placement agreement. If he is not discharged prior to his 18th birthday, ensure that he

is in State paid foster placement on his 18th birthday in order to have continued Medicaid coverage for a youth transitioning (“aging out”) out of foster care up to the age of 26, due to the Affordable Care Act (he must have been in foster care (state paid or not (such as relative care) on his 18th birthday in order to be eligible for this Medicaid benefit. The youth could also be eligible for aftercare and the PAL stipend of the program if he is in foster care on his 18th birthday (for the PAL stipend, which is state paid, youth must be in Iowa state paid foster care; for aftercare, the youth is eligible regardless if foster care was state paid or not and the youth may be eligible not only if he stays in care until his 18th birthday but also if he leaves care between 17 ½ and 18 years of age – aftercare/PAL services/stipend are available to eligible youth between the ages of 18 and 21). (Added 2/15/12)

Question 8: If a SAL youth turns 18 in the middle of the month and is discharging from the program does the youth keep the monthly stipend? How is the case closed in FACS?

Answer 8: If a SAL youth turns 18 and discharges from the program in the middle of the month the youth does get to keep the monthly stipend. If staff (DHS) is having a problem with a FACS entry they should contact the CWIS Help Desk at 800-831-6312 or cwishelp@dhs.state.ia.us Adjustments are required to enter an exit in the middle of a month in which a SAL payment was issued. (Added 5/29/12)

Question 9: We have a child who is turning 18 next week and is signing himself back in in order to participate in SAL. He is not a citizen (they are working on citizenship issues) and he does not speak English. Is the provider contractually obligated to provide this service?

Answer 9: The contract is clear about providing culturally competent services (Section 1.3.1, Deliverables) in the following deliverables:

Throughout the provision of care, actively ensure that the Child stays connected to the Child’s kin, culture, and community as documented in the Child’s Case Permanency Plan.

AND

Use service approaches that are culturally competent. Each Child engaged in care shall be provided services that address any special language needs, reinforce positive cultural practices, and acknowledge and build upon ethnic, socio-cultural, and linguistic strengths. (Added 7/25/12)

Question 10: For children age 18 or older who are in SAL, is there a minimum required number of hours that they need to be attending school and also working per week?

Answer 10: Iowa Code 234.1 under definitions for child concerning child and family services is clear about this: those in foster care (which would include SAL) must be 1) in full-time attendance at an accredited school pursuing a course of study leading to a high school diploma or 2) attending an instructional program leading to a high school equivalency diploma or 3) been identified by the director of special education of the area education agency as a child requiring special education as defined in section 256B.2, subsection 1. The youth is not required to work. (Added 1/4/13)

Service

Question 1: Regarding the Casey Life Skills assessment, could you find out the following?

1. Initially, is having this done/completed the responsibility of the agency providing SAL services? The reason I’m asking is that in the past we always had the referring entity get this done prior to admission.

2. How often should we have the SAL client re-assessed (take the assessment again)? Every quarter, every 6 months, at discharge?
3. Relating back to the first question, what if the Casey Life Skills assessment was done 2 months prior to admission? Could we use that assessment or do we need to do our own/start anew?

Answer 1:

- 1) Yes, the initial assessment is the responsibility of the referring agency and should be attached to the approval form for SAL signed by the SAM or their designee and the SAL Prescreening form
- 2) The contract states periodic basis; thus, according to the specific needs of the youth. Recommendation is a minimum of 6 months and yes, at discharge would be a great idea.
- 3) Yes, you can use that assessment.

Question 2: Is it the responsibility of the SAL contractor to secure a scattered placement site for the youth?

Answer 2: Yes, per the SAL contract (Section 1.3.1, Deliverables) in the following deliverable:

Assist the Child (and their positive support system) in locating a living arrangement as outlined in the SAL Required Services definition and the Child's plan.

“Assist the child...” puts the responsibility on the contractor to work with the youth in finding a living arrangement that meets the definition of “SAL required services.” Contractor staff should take the youth and the youth’s positive support system willing to assist (e.g., parent, foster parent, relative, etc) in finding a living arrangement (e.g., apartment unit) for the youth.

“**SAL Required Services**” means 1) ensuring through visits to the supervised apartment living situation that there is no reasonable cause for believing that the Child’s mode of living or living situation presents unacceptable risks to the Child’s health or safety and that the living arrangement has been approved by the Referring Worker and meets the following minimum standards: complies with applicable state and local zoning, fire, sanitary, and safety regulations; provides reasonably convenient access to schools, places of employment, community resources, and services and supports required by the Child and is reasonable priced to fit within the Child’s budget, 2) providing for ongoing supervision of the Child (including but not limited to guidance, oversight, and behavior monitoring to ensure that the Child’s living arrangement is maintained in a reasonably safe condition, the Child has access to a telephone, there is an operating smoke alarm on each level of occupancy, the Child is receiving necessary health care, the Child is receiving appropriate and sufficient services and supports, the Child is complying with case/service plan requirements, 3) having a minimum of weekly face-to-face contacts for Children under age 18 and biweekly (once every two weeks) for Children aged 18 or older, and 4) providing Life Skills Training. (added 7/1/13)

Question 3: If SAL provides a life skills group but only one SAL youth attends and the rest are from other programs, do they charge SAL group unit of service?

Answer 3: Yes, the contractor would bill based on their group rate of service for this one SAL youth. (added 6/18/14)

Performance Measures

Question 1: How would you like us to report school attendance? If a kid attended, everyday but has excused absences in the month, does that impact his attendance negatively, or is it “excused”?

Answer 1: School attendance is measured by what the attending school’s policies are and is measured on a quarterly basis since that is how school attendance per Iowa Code is measured. While one thinks that excused absences would not be counted against the youth in “regularly attending school” for day counts, it’s best to check with the school district on their policies.

Question 2: Can AA meetings be counted as an organized community activity regarding permanency outcome 2?

Answer 2: If the youth goes to AA meetings as part of their service plan/treatment, then it does not count; however, if the youth goes to additional AA meetings than required, the additional meetings can count.

Question 3: Could the assigned DHS/JCS worker be considered a Positive Support for a youth in SAL?

Answer 3: No, not for performance measures. (Added 1/27/14)

Question 4: When a youth leaves a cluster site setting and goes to a scattered site setting in the middle of the month, would performance measure reporting be seamless or not reported for that month? For example, a youth leave cluster site on December 10th and goes to a scattered site on that same day. Would the performance measure reporting be NA for the cluster site setting for the month of December (seen as month of discharge) and the performance measure reporting for the scattered site setting for the month of December as NA (seen as month of placement)?

Answer 4: The performance measures would **not be reported as NA** for the month of December for either the cluster site setting or the scattered site setting. The performance measures for the youth would be reported for the month of December seamlessly, regardless of move from a cluster site setting to a scattered site setting. **Note – Regarding the well-being performance measure: The last school must transfer records to the “new” school within 5 working days, and the student can enroll in the “new” school prior to the school having received the school records; this is state law.**

Contractor Staffing

Question 1: Where does it state the requirement of staff (caseworkers) working for SAL program? I need to know what degrees are acceptable and minimum # of years of experience.

Answer 1: 441 Chapter 108.4(3) Caseworker qualifications. Therapy and counseling services, psychosocial evaluation and assessment and care plan development shall be provided by staff who meet one of the following minimum education and experience criteria:

a. Graduation from an accredited four-year college or university and the equivalent of three years of full-time experience in social work or experience in the delivery of human services in a public or private agency. In addition, these individuals shall have been employed by the agency prior to September 1, 1993. Persons meeting this criterion will not be qualified to provide therapy and counseling if they change place of employment.

b. Graduation from an accredited four-year college, institute or university with a bachelor’s degree in social work from a program accredited by the council on social work education.

- c. Graduation from an accredited four-year college or university with a bachelor's degree in a human service field related to social work and the equivalent of two years of full-time experience in social work or experience in the delivery of human services in a public or private agency.
- d. Graduation from an accredited four-year college or university with a master's degree in social work or related human service field.
- e. Any equivalent combination of graduate education in the social or behavioral sciences from an accredited four-year college or university and qualifying experience up to a maximum of 30 semester hours for one year of the required experience. (added 5/7/12)

Question 2: What is the requirement overnight (3rd shift) for cluster site staff – do they need to remain awake or can they be allowed to sleep?

Answer 2: The decision has been made by DHS to leave it up to each SAL agency, regarding whether overnight supervisory staff in SAL cluster site settings remain awake or can sleep. However, regardless of which decision each agency makes, DHS's clear expectation (along with DIAs licensing expectations) is that staff on-site is always readily accessible for each child in the cluster site setting, regardless of the time of day. (Added 12/23/13)

Other

Question 1: If a SAL placement is a college dorm, is the youth eligible for food assistance?

Answer 1: Regardless of funding, if a person lives in an institution that furnishes the majority of meals, he/she is not eligible for Food Assistance. Specific to college students living in dormitories, the Employees' Manual at 7-C-22 states: "Dormitory students are not eligible for Food Assistance when the institution serves them a majority of their meals. Dormitory students who purchase a plan that does not serve a majority of their meals nor doesn't purchase a meal plan can receive Food Assistance if otherwise eligible." (added 2/7/13)

Question 2: Can a relative's home (not the parents) be a SAL placement?

Answer 2: Yes. The relative would need to pass the same background checks as any other relative placement with the safety of the youth paramount. (added 7/1/13)