

TOPIC: FLEX FUNDS**A
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T****WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW****What are flex funds?**

Flex funds are a source of money established by the NJ Child Welfare Reform Plan, and every local DYFS office has been allotted a set amount. Approval is based on the nature of the request and available funds. Funds are accessed through your DYFS Resource Family Support Worker or caseworker in the local DYFS office. The funds are available to resource families and birth families to meet a temporary need. According to DYFS policy, "Flex funds are utilized for exceptional services until sustainable services or informal resources can be put in place." Some examples of flex funds are:

- *Emergency respite/child care/babysitting*
- *Tutoring for a child*
- *A specialized school activity (photos, proms, sports, trips)*
- *A task identified at a Family Team Meeting*
- *Transportation for family visitation*
- *Emergency home repairs*
- *Food, clothing*
- *Emergency shelter*
- *Rent payment to avoid eviction*
- *Security deposit and/or first and last month's rent*
- *Utility bill payment*
- *Emergency housekeeping services*
- *Furniture or required equipment purchase for a child*
- *A child's recreational activity fee*
- *A new refrigerator/stove/hot water heater*
- *Financial support to allow a child to accompany a resource family on vacation*
- *Fee for enrollment in a camp-type program*
- *Payment for any other individual child or family service*
- *One-time assistance with car insurance premiums, initial down payments or other monthly household expenses may be considered.*

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What are the guiding principles for consideration of flex funds?

The guiding principles are to keep a child safe, ensure a child's well-being, prevent an out-of-home placement, stabilize a child's placement, promote reunification, and help achieve tasks established in Family Team Meetings.

What can't flex funds be used for?

Flex funds cannot be used:

- *To support unlicensed community-based placements or unlicensed, out-of-state residential placements*
- *To secure credit or a loan, or to satisfy any loans, debt, income taxes, credit, or other legal or financial obligations*
- *To supplement existing DHS established rates or fee structure for services*

Do I have any recourse if my request is denied?

There is no formal process for review; however, if you believe that your request is reasonable and funds are available, we recommend you ask to speak to the caseworker's supervisor. You are entitled to an explanation as to why you were denied. If you need our assistance, contact FAFS and ask to speak to a Resource Family Advocate. We can be reached at 1.800.222.0047.

Does Foster and Adoptive Family Services (FAFS) offer a program that can help me?

Yes, FAFS has a New Jersey statewide program called Fostering Wishes for Children. The program grants wishes to children in care, up to \$75 annually. Some examples of wishes that have been granted are soccer registration, senior pictures, dance lessons, piano lessons, art lessons, art supplies, flute lessons, day camp, and much more. However, funding is limited. You should first seek funding through the DYFS Flex Funds Program.

How do I apply for the Fostering Wishes for Children program?

Call FAFS' Hotline at 1.800.222.0047 and ask for an application.

How is the Fostering Wishes for Children program funded?

The program is funded through private donations. You can donate by sending a check to FWFC, Foster and Adoptive Family Services, PO Box 518, Monmouth Junction, NJ, 08852; or call our Director of Association Development and donate with a MasterCard or Visa credit card. Our number is 1.800.222.0047.

Information provided in this Fact Sheet was taken from the DYFS Administrative Policy and Procedures Manual.