



Know Your Rights in ASPIRE and Parents as Scholars (PAS)

What is ASPIRE?

ASPIRE stands for Additional Support for People in Retraining and Education. It is a work, training, and education program. Most parents who receive income support from the TANF program are required to participate in ASPIRE. The Department of Health and Human Services contracts with a company called Fedcap to run the ASPIRE program.

What is Parents as Scholars?

Parents as Scholars (PAS) is a program to support parents on TANF who are enrolled in a two or four-year college degree program. Benefits include monthly cash benefits (same as you would receive from TANF) and support services (same as you can receive from ASPIRE). PAS participants can also get support from “navigators” and have fewer hourly participation requirements than ASPIRE participants. If you want to apply for PAS, ask Fedcap.

What are Support Services?

ASPIRE and PAS participants can request support services to help them meet their work, training, or education goals. These are financial benefits in different categories. They range from childcare to car repairs to help with eyeglasses (see the chart below). Each category has a monthly, annual, or lifetime cap. If you want support services, ask Fedcap at any time using the form below.

Know Your Rights in ASPIRE and PAS

- You have the right for your choices and goals to be considered in your Career Plan. If Fedcap asks you to do an activity or work towards a goal that you don't agree with or if Fedcap won't put support services in your plan that you need, tell Fedcap you disagree. You have the right to dispute your Career Plan.
- You have the right to change your Career Plan at any time. You can ask to change it if you want to change your activities, request good cause, or add a support service. If your request is denied, you have the right to appeal.
- You have the right to get a written notice if a support service is denied explaining why and how you can appeal. If your request for a support service is denied, you have the right to appeal.
- You have the right to request good cause to be excused from an ASPIRE activity or requirement or appeal a sanction if Fedcap or DHHS say you're not complying with your Career Plan.
- You have the right to receive a paper copy of your Career Plan.
- You have the right to speak with your case manager's supervisor if you have a complaint.
- You can contact [Maine Equal Justice](#) to ask for legal help with problems in ASPIRE and PAS.

REQUEST FOR SUPPORT SERVICES

To: Fedcap/DHHS

From: _____

According to the ASPIRE/PAS program laws and rules, I have the right to request to amend my Career Plan any time. Fedcap/DHHS are required to include the support services I need to complete the activities in my Career Plan. I am requesting these support services to help me complete my activities:

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Childcare | <input type="checkbox"/> | Technology and Software |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Transportation | <input type="checkbox"/> | Internet Access |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Car Repairs | <input type="checkbox"/> | Clothing and Uniforms |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Car Insurance | <input type="checkbox"/> | Occupational Expenses |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Eye Care | <input type="checkbox"/> | Relocation Costs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Dental Care | <input type="checkbox"/> | Job Development |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Past Tuition and Fees | <input type="checkbox"/> | Job Placement and Retention |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Current Tuition and Fees | <input type="checkbox"/> | Vocational Evaluation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Books and Supplies | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other: _____ |

I request to amend my Career Plan to include these support services as soon as possible. If I need to provide documents to support the request, please tell me what those are so I can provide them.

If my request is denied, please send me a notice explaining why.

If my request is denied I want a fair hearing.*

*Check this box if you know you want a fair hearing. You can also wait to hear if your request is denied and why and then request a fair hearing then by emailing or calling your Fedcap worker or DHHS.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Support Service	Requirements	Maximum Amount
Childcare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Covers childcare for children under 13 or unable to care for themselves Provider cannot live in the home of the participant Provider must undergo background check 	See OCFS website for DHHS's current rates
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Covers mileage for transportation to get to ASPIRE scheduled activities Vehicle must be registered If participant is driving, the participant must be a licensed driver If someone else is driving, DHHS can provide carpool reimbursement Can cover bus or taxi fare if it would be the least expensive transportation 	\$0.45/Mile \$140/Week
Car Repairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vehicle must be registered to a licensed driver who is the participant, the participant's spouse, or in the TANF household DHHS must pre-approve an itemized estimate from a mechanic Repairs can be done by any qualified person In emergencies, necessary towing and/or repairs can be reimbursed (up to \$1,000) if requested within 1 week 	\$1,000/Year (does not carry over from year to year)
Car Insurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participant must be a licensed driver Vehicle must be registered in participant's name 	\$600/Year
Education and Training Expenses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For post-secondary education tuition and fees DHHS can cover tuition and fees that are not covered by grants and scholarships (e.g. Pell grants) Participants should request help from Fedcap/DHHS before taking out student loans to minimize school debt 	\$6,000/Academic Year
Books and Supplies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For books and supplies required by an educational program (usually listed on a course syllabus) DHHS will only cover books and supplies if grants and scholarships are insufficient to cover the costs 	\$2,000/Academic Year
Clothing and Uniforms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For clothes required for a job or necessary for appropriate appearance at a job or emergency clothing for immediate needs like winter clothing 	\$300/Year
Occupational Expenses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DHHS can cover licensing or certification fees, tools and equipment required by an employer, or material or equipment needed for participant's approved self-employment plan 	\$500/Period of Enrollment
Technology and Software	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For computer or software necessary to complete an education or training program if no reasonable home access to a computer 	\$500/Lifetime
Internet Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For internet if necessary to complete an education or training program 	\$50/month
Eye Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For employment, education, or training DHHS must approve the cost before purchase DHHS will only cover costs not covered by health insurance 	\$200/Year or more with letter from eye doctor
Dental Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For dental care necessary to alleviate pain or obtain employment DHHS will only cover cost not covered by health insurance Does not cover orthodontics like braces 	\$2,000/Period of Enrollment
Past Tuition & Fees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For outstanding tuition and fees when it is required to access previously earned credits 	\$1,500/Lifetime
Relocation Costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For relocation costs (like moving costs, security deposit, etc.) when moving is required to participate in education, training, or employment and commuting would be impractical 	\$500/Period of Enrollment
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Catch-all category for other expenses necessary to complete Career Plan activities 	\$500/Year

These are the most common support services. For more information on ASPIRE go to MaineEqualJustice.org.