

E. Program Benefits

INTENT

The intended uses of TA-DVS benefits are twofold:

- Benefits are intended to help meet emergent needs related to the domestic violence situation; and
- To help stabilize the family so they can stay free from domestic violence.

Agreed-upon payments should address the specific crisis situation or specific need related to stabilization from the domestic violence and should be documented on the *Self-Sufficiency Domestic Violence Assistance Agreement* ([DHS 1543](#)).

TA-DVS payments can be issued to meet the family's needs for shelter, food, relocation and stabilization. TA-DVS payments can also be used to meet other needs that will promote safety or independence from the abuser.

Benefits; TA-DVS Rule

[461-135-1230](#) — Benefits; TA-DVS

1. Safety Case Plan requirements

A Safety Case Plan is required before issuing TA-DVS program benefits.

The Safety Plan needs to address what resources the survivor has available, what the plan for the use of \$1,200 grant is, what is needed for stabilization, and what community resources are being accessed or are being referred.

Please refer to the *Self-Sufficiency Domestic Violence Assistance Agreement* ([DHS 1543](#)). All Safety Plans should be documented on the [DHS 1543](#) and narrated in TRACS.

Example 1: *Jordan applies for TA-DVS and is approved against her husband, Leo. Jordan reported that she has a job, and will be getting paid next week. Jordan said she wants to move into a new location that Leo does not know, and needs the \$1,200.00 to help with move-in costs. Jordan also said she wants to file for divorce. She is referred to the DHS DV Co-Located advocate to go with her to get the divorce paperwork and for further safety planning.*

Jordan's plan on the [DHS 1543](#) is to look for a safe location, move into a new home that Leo does not know the location of, and to work

with the co-located advocate. Jordan will use her paycheck to pay some of the move-in costs.

The safety plan can change as the survivor's situation changes.

If the survivor determines they need something else for their safety, we update their plan. The [DHS 1543](#) is a working document.

Benefits; TA-DVS Rule

[461-135-1230](#) — Benefits; TA-DVS

Case Planning; JOBS, Pre-TANF, REF, SFPSS, TA-DVS Rule

[461-190-0151](#) — Case Planning; JOBS, Pre-TANF, REF, SFPSS, TA-DVS

2. Verification of payments

Verification is needed for every payment request for TA-DVS. The required verification will vary based on what is being requested. Verification must be narrated and kept in file.

When a survivor requests a payment, gather the needed verification. If we do not have all the information we need, pend the payment request with a [DHS 210A](#).

Examples of appropriate verification:

- **Request for Move-In Costs at Rental Home:** Verify information such as property ownership (can use assessor and tax records) to determine appropriate benefit level or for dual payee purposes, verify details on the lease or rental agreement such as who is listed to be in the home, rental payment terms, etc.
- **Request for Truck/Trailer Rental:** Verify the cost of the rental, the amount of miles to be driven, and the estimated cost of gas. Request information about how many trips the survivor believes they need to make to cover costs, verification of valid driver's license (or statement that another driver with valid license is driving).
- **Request for Lock Change:** If renting, verify if the landlord can change the lock, verify the cost of the locks with a printout from the store, etc.

Verify other TANF eligibility factors if questionable or needed to determine eligibility (e.g., pregnancy, residency, children in the home, etc.).

Example 2: *Sonoma is applying for TA-DVS. The worker can see that Sonoma has applied seven times in the past and has always claimed that she is pregnant. The worker verifies with Sonoma that she did not give birth*

to any children. Since the pregnancy is questionable, pend any payment requests for verification from a medical professional of the pregnancy.

For benefit of safety planning for Sonoma, talk with her when the TA-DVS application is approved. Let her know before we can make any payments, we will need verification of her pregnancy from a medical professional. This gives Sonoma a chance to get verification before she needs a payment.

If DHS does not receive all required verification, or the verification was not accurate, the payment request is denied.

Denied payments must be given *Notice of Decision and Action Taken* ([DHS 456](#)). Only mail the notice if there is a safe address. If there is no safe address, narrate the notice and keep a copy in file.

Example 3: *Doreen turned in a rental agreement as request for payment. DHS reviews the rental agreement and check's the assessor. DHS determines the person listed as the landlord on the rental agreement does not own the home. DHS calls the homeowner and discovers that the listed landlord is not authorized to sublease the home.*

Doreen's payment request is denied because once DHS verified all information in her request, we learned the landlord was trying to help sublease to Doreen, inappropriately. We give Doreen a [DHS 456](#) and help her to locate similar safe housing.

Verification; General

[461-115-0610](#) – Verification; General

Benefits; TA-DVS Rule

[461-135-1230](#) — Benefits; TA-DVS

3. Payment limit

TA-DVS benefits are limited to the minimum necessary to meet the emergent need up to the following amount and are not intended to meet ongoing or recurrent needs:

- \$1,200 for services needed to stabilize families who are fleeing domestic violence or who need assistance to remain free of violence.

If the survivor has income available during the 90-day eligibility period, consider it in determining appropriate benefit level at each payment request. Payment of program

benefits should not be delayed based upon pending income if doing so would put the client at increased risk of domestic violence.

Alternative community resources, if they exist, should be pursued prior to issuing TA-DVS payments, unless doing so would cause a delay that could affect the survivor's safety.

At this time, staff should not write IOUs, promissory letters or use the SPOTS card for any payments to business entities.

TA-DVS Benefits can only be used during the 90-day eligibility period.

DHS cannot make payments past the 90-day eligibility period unless all needed verification was received by DHS prior to or on the 90th day and DHS was unable to make payment due to agency error.

All payments must be issued within 10 days after the final date of the eligibility period.

Example 4: *Alexis was approved for TA-DVS. Her safety plan was to get housing and she was waiting for her housing voucher. Alexis communicated this with her worker. Alexis got her housing voucher and her requested home passed inspection on day 88 of her eligibility period. Alexis got her rental agreement and brought to DHS as soon as possible, at 4:00 on day 90 of her eligibility period.*

Her worker was not able to call the landlord and get the payment authorized before the end of the day. DHS is able to make payment on day 91, because all information was received and DHS was unable to issue payment.

Examples of Agency Error:

- No financial clerk in office to make payment at time of request
- DHS called the landlord before the end of the eligibility period and got a returned call after business hours
- There was no one with signature authorization available to sign the *Authorization of Cash Payment* ([MSC 437](#))
- All information was received and DHS did not have available staff to review and authorize before the end of business day

NOTE



All TA-DVS payment requests need to be completed on the Authorization of Case Payment ([MSC 437](#)).

TA-DVS benefits cannot be paid with the VISA SPOTS card or add TA-DVS benefits to the EBT (EBISS).

CAUTION



If a payment is denied or modified under the TA-DVS program, provide the survivor with a Notice of Decision and Action Taken ([DHS 456](#)) which states the reason for denial or the modification.

4. Motels

TA-DVS funds address specific crisis situations where safety is at risk due to domestic violence. TA-DVS funds cannot be used to meet ongoing or recurrent needs such as ongoing rent and utilities. This includes ongoing use of a motel.

TA-DVS funds can only be used during the 90-day eligibility period. A payment for use of a motel is intended to meet temporary safety needs when no other suitable public or private housing is available. More than 50 percent of the TA-DVS allocation should only rarely be used to pay for motels. Consider the following when agreeing to make a motel payment:

- What other housing options are available to the survivor?
 - Domestic violence shelters (in the area or outside of the area).
 - Homeless shelters.
 - Other programs that provided motel/hotel vouchers.
 - Staying with family or friends.
 - Any funds the survivor has available should be used prior to DHS agreeing to pay for a motel.
- The *Domestic Violence Assistance Agreement* ([DHS 1543M](#)) must include the need for motel/hotel and the expected length of stay.

- Approvals should be limited to the minimum necessary nights to keep someone safe. If a survivor has additional safety needs, then further nights (within the financial limits noted above) can be approved.
- The survivor must actively seek permanent safe housing or a continued motel/hotel stay request should be denied.
- No person except the victim and their children should be staying overnight in the motel room.
- The victim is responsible for following the motel rules and for any fees or additional charges such as smoking fees, pet fees, damage to the room or theft of motel property.
- If TA-DVS funds are still available, a branch can decide to use the remaining TA-DVS funds to pay for repairs or minor damage in order to maintain good relationships with the motel.
- If the victim has applied for and received TA-DVS in the past 12 months and the funds were used for a motel/hotel the plan ([DHS 1543](#)) should not include further motel/hotel stays except under an extreme emergency situation and then for the minimum necessary nights, but no longer than one week. It is recommended that these payments be staffed with a manager or lead worker.
- Payments should be paid directly to the motel as a vendor or dual payee check.

5. Shelter and relocation needs

When issuing shelter-related payments, the survivor's immediate safety needs must be addressed. Make all attempts to help the survivor access affordable housing.

Make sure to verify landlord information in TA-DVS cases for the purpose of issuing a dual payee or vendor payment. Contact your local county taxation and assessment to verify ownership of the property.

CAUTION



It is inappropriate for landlords to ask for more money from our survivors than other potential renters. In this type of situation, you would inform the landlord that you are only able to pay the same amount they would ask of other prospective renters.

If the landlord continues to ask for more money, notify the survivor of the maximum we can pay (what the landlord asks from other prospective renters) and that the landlord is requesting them to pay more. The survivor has the option of paying any additional amount

requested. The survivor may want to contact a legal aid organization to see what rights they may have in this situation.

The following are shelter and relocation need costs that can be potentially paid through TA-DVS funds:

- Initial month's rent or first and last, if required to secure safe housing, mortgage and utility costs, including basic payments, connection charges and deposits
- Rent, if the inability to pay rent is related to domestic violence
- Domestic violence shelter or "safe home" costs for room and board
- Moving and relocation costs
- If making a vehicle-related payment (moving van or private vehicle), the driver needs to have a valid driver's license and car insurance
- Transportation to another area of residence. This could be used to move within or out of state
- Transportation costs to look for housing during the 90-day eligibility period can be issued using TA-DVS funds if no other resources are available
- Repairs to provide safe housing. One-time house, electrical and plumbing repairs if essential to the health and safety of the occupants, if less costly than moving to other quarters. (This can include repairs necessary for health and safety when damage was done by the abuser.)

Example 5: *Carol was approved for TA-DVS. She intends to remain in her home because her abuser has been arrested for theft and domestic violence. Her abuser broke into her house, beat her up and took \$500.00 she had set aside for buying money orders to pay her utilities. She has a utility shut-off notice for water and needs \$200.00 to make the payment. Since the reason the client cannot pay the utilities is related to the abuser's actions, we can make the payment to support stabilization.*

After a month or so, Carol brings in her electric bill. She is behind in payments, again due to the money the abuser took. She still has TA-DVS funds available. She receives SSI and will be able to pay future utility costs with those funds. We are not able to approve this request because it is a recurrent/ongoing expense. We would get Carol connected with community resources to address this need.

Example 6: *George requested help to move to California. He has family there. His abuser has no idea where in California they live. He needs a U-*

Haul trailer and gas money to move, and since they live in southern California, he also needs to spend one night in a motel and will need food on the way. The worker issued a check to U-Haul, a pre-paid gas card to cover gas costs, and arranged to pay the motel. George will use his EBT card for food. (The abuser was not on the EBT card with George, so this does not present a safety concern.)

Example 7: *Lupe requested help to purchase a travel trailer. She felt it would help her to be able to leave quickly if the abuser found her again. Program benefits for shelter do not include the purchase of travel trailers or other recreational vehicles. The worker denied the payment and provided the client with a Notice of Decision and Action Taken ([DHS 456](#)) with the denial reason. The worker then referred Lupe to the local domestic violence program to see if they knew of resources that could meet her need. The worker told Lupe if she was able to find resources to pay for the trailer, we could help with costs for the space rent.*

NOTE



Past due costs should only be paid if money/payment was withheld or taken by the abuser; the payment enhances safety or decreases risk of further domestic violence and a lesser cost alternative is not available; the money is unavailable because it was used to help the client stay safe (i.e., payment for temporary shelter).

Unable to pay ongoing costs: If rental/housing costs are above the survivor's demonstrated ability to pay, this is not an automatic reason for denial. If the monthly housing costs are above future available income levels, a plan to address how the survivor will meet future housing costs should be discussed and documented on the [DHS 1543](#).

Example 8: *Andy has come in to talk with her worker about the apartment she has located. Andy indicates that the monthly rent is more than her TANF grant. The worker ask Andy if she plans on meeting the ongoing rent since her TANF is only \$432.00. Andy explains that her plan is to locate a roommate. Her worker adds the plan to locate a roommate on the [DHS 1543](#).*

NOTE



Remember, a discussion about what the survivor is doing to make this happen should take place (e.g., has the survivor placed ads in the newspaper, posted roommate requests on bulletin boards, gotten a potential roommate lined up, etc.). If the survivor indicates they are going to get a job, what are they doing to make this happen (e.g., registered with the Employment Department, contracted temporary agencies working with the JOBS program, has a job offer pending, etc.)? If the survivor indicates she is working with housing, who are they working with? What are the time frames for accessing a housing subsidy?

On occasion the Department of Human Services (DHS) will issue a payment to a landlord, and then for some reason, the survivor will not want to move into the residence, or something happens that the landlord does not make the residence available as agreed.

DHS would only reissue the payment if the landlord agrees to return the check or the landlord does not make the residence available in a timely manner and the survivor's safety remains at risk. If the survivor changes their mind about the location for reasons unrelated to safety, DHS would not reissue the funds. A decision notice denying the payment would be issued and should note the funds requested are not needed to address a safety issue.

NOTE



If the local office receives a return check from a landlord or business entity, contact [TA-DVS Policy](#) for directions on how to handle.

6. Roommates

When a survivor and people (18 and older) not in the filing group are moving into a new home together, the people moving with the survivor are expected to pay an equal portion of the move-in costs.

Example 9: *Jane and her daughter have been approved for TA-DVS. They are moving with a roommate to an apartment. Since Jane's roommate is not in the filing group, the worker will need to take the total move-in costs of \$1,650.00 and divide by the whole household of*

*three (1650.00/3=550.00). The worker will then multiply 550.00 by the benefit group of two (550*2=1100). The worker informs Jane that DHS will help Jane with 1100.00 of the move-in costs and her roommate will need to pay the remaining cost of 550.00.*

In rare circumstances, if the person our survivor is moving in with is unable to pay an equal portion of the move-in costs, we need to have the discussion what sort of agreement is being made between the survivor and roommate.

Example 10: *Misty believes that if she and her friend Shawna move into an apartment together, that not only can she afford the monthly rent and utilities, she will be safer. Misty explains that Shawna is on SSI and receives a monthly check and at this time does not have any funds to help with the move-in costs, but Misty and Shawna discussed that Shawna will pay little bit more of the monthly rent until Misty locates employment. The worker determines that since rentals are hard to locate on a TANF grant alone and that Shawna is willing to pay more of the monthly rent until Misty locates employment and living together helps Misty to feel safe, that DSH will pay the full move-in costs.*

7. Air travel

DHS can authorize payments for relocation costs, including but not limited to:

- Train tickets
- Bus tickets
- Gas money for relocation
- Air Travel and baggage costs

For any and all Air Travel, DHS contracts with an outside agency to purchase flights. All flights must be purchased through the contractor.

For process and current contractor information, refer to the [DHS Self-Sufficiency Domestic Violence Staff Tools](#) Web page.

8. Food needs

- Issue payments for food needs only when the needs cannot be met by the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or other community resources.

- Issue payments for food as part of relocation costs.

NOTE



Payments for food needs should be related to the domestic violence situation and are not intended to replace SNAP program benefits.

Please reference Family Services Manual: Issuing and Restoring Benefits, Chapter B: Client Losses and Restoration of Benefits ([FSM-B](#)) for details on when to reissue SNAP benefits.

9. Medical needs

- Medical care for situations that appear to be life threatening at the time of occurrence. (Accept the client's statement for verification.)
- Medical care necessary to prevent medical problems from becoming life threatening
- Medical care determined necessary by the branch office

Example 11: *Katrina requested help with her prescriptions. She has applied for medical but because her abuser kept all her personal documents, she must wait until she can get a copy of her birth certificate from Idaho to get medical help. She has asthma and needs her medication to maintain her health. The worker issued payments to the pharmacy for Katrina's asthma medication. (Hint: Do not forget to code the special pay payment as a 2M payment instead of 22.)*

CAUTION



For any medical payments made using the TA-DVS funds, workers must use SPL code 2M on the Authorization of Cash Payment ([MSC 437](#)) form.

NOTE

Explore medical benefits offered through other programs before issuing under the TA-DVS program.

10. Issuing payments

All payments must be authorized on an *Authorization of Cash Payment* ([MSC 437](#)). All [MSC 437](#) requests must be signed by the worker requesting the payment, and signed and authorized by a DHS Staff Member that has signature authorization.

Payments should be issued as vendor or dual-payee. If there is an emergency, a check out of office may be issued in the survivor's name.

Staff will need to explain to the survivor that any payment made to the survivor is now considered vested. Vested is a legal word used to say that payment has been issued and there is no longer a commitment by DHS for further payment.

Legal Status of Benefit Payments Rule

[461-165-0010](#) — Legal Status of Benefit Payments

Example 12: *Honor has come to the office and requested a payment for a locksmith to help change out her locks quickly. The worker determines that the payment request will help meet her safety, her need to have this done today is due to the emergent situation and the worker verified that the costs to change the locks is reasonable. After verifying with the locksmith, the worker will complete the *Authorization of Cash Payment* (MSC 437) requesting a check out of office paid to the survivor. The worker explains that once the check is issued and given to the survivor, the check is now considered vested to the survivor.*

NOTE

For all TA-DVS payments, use reason code 22, unless for medical costs or for noncitizens.

For medical costs, use code 2M. For noncitizens, use code 2N.

11. Reimbursements

Normally DHS will not reimburse payments on behalf of or by the client that were not pre-approved by the DHS worker. Workers will need to add to the [DHS 1543](#) or TRACS narrative that they have agreed to a payment. If there is no prior approval, reimbursements will not be approved.

Example 13: *Iman and her worker have discussed that she will be moving in to her new apartment in two weeks. The worker has approved the move in and is now waiting to confirm with the landlord the actual move in date to verify the prorated rent amount. The weekend comes and goes and the following Monday, Iman contacts her worker saying an emergency occurred over the weekend and she had to move to the apartment immediately. Iman had to ask her friend to pay the move in costs and Iman was hoping DHS would reimburse the money to her friend. In this situation the worker had already pre-approved the move in costs but not the total payment. After verifying with the landlord the costs and that Iman's friend paid, the worker can approve the reimbursement to Iman's friend.*

12. Other payment situations

- Payments necessary to set up a household that are not available through other community resources and determined as necessary by the branch office (i.e., beds or other basic furniture needs) when such items have been left behind when fleeing abuse.
- When a client requests an initial fee and month of storage and it would be less expensive than replacing items they would be forced to leave behind, a storage payment can be made. Payment of ongoing storage costs is not appropriate because it is a recurrent ongoing fee.
- Payments necessary to meet other needs identified by the branch office that will contribute to the safety of the family (e.g., new locks, motion detectors, a post office box, etc.).
- Payments necessary to replace personal items that may have been left behind when fleeing the abuse, when those items are not available through other community resources (e.g., clothes for both the survivor and the child, hygiene items, etc.).
- Limited child care costs to attend support group or needed to complete activities listed on the domestic violence assistance agreement during the 90-day eligibility period, if TA-DVS funds are available after emergent needs have been addressed.

13. Nonallowable TA-DVS payments

TA-DVS funds, while intended to meet needs related to domestic violence, are not intended to cover items such as:

- Purchases of a car (including making car payments) or purchases of a recreational vehicle, including travel trailers
- Purchases of a gun or other weapons
- Payment of legal fees or attorney fees (refer the client to your local legal aid office)
- Payment of fines or other penalties
- Purchases of a pet (this includes animals that are designated as guard animals)
- Payment of pet fees (unless the pet is a service animal, and only when the service status has been verified by a medical or counseling professional)
- Purchases of new furniture:
 - unless the furniture was left behind when the client fled domestic violence; and
 - the furniture is essential to setting up a household (such as beds, dressers, dining room table and chairs, a couch, etc.), when those items are not available through a community resource or lower-cost alternatives are not available.
- Payment of outstanding or past due costs such as rent or utilities when the client does not intend to stay in the residence and/or the need for payment was not related to the current domestic violence situation
- Payment for moving household or personal belongings from another state
- Nonessential items such as a television or a computer, or services such as cable, satellite, internet, etc., even if such items or services were left behind when the client fled the domestic violence
- Payment of a request about which inaccurate information was provided
- Payment requests without verification of the costs and/or the payment information

Example 14: *Mary and her children went to the local domestic violence shelter with nothing but the clothes they were wearing. They are needing basic clothing and personal items. The shelter was able to help with hygiene*

items and a few used clothing items. Mary still needs some items that the shelter was not able to provide. After talking with her worker, Mary located the necessary items at a local department store. She asked them to hold the items. She brought an estimate to her worker for the cost and the worker verified with the department store that they would accept a state check. A check was issued to the department store.

Example 15: *Lisa asked for help to pay for her attorney. Her abuser is trying to gain custody of the children. Program benefits do not include legal or attorney fees. The worker denied the payment, using the [DHS 456](#) with the denial reason, and referred the client to legal aid and the local domestic violence service provider that may know of attorneys willing to do pro-bono work in domestic violence cases.*

Example 16: *Natalia asked for help to pay for some replacement clothing for her children. When she left her home, the children only had the clothes they were wearing. She got some things from local resources, but winter is coming and she needs to get more warm items for the kids.*

Natalia needs verification of what she is wanting to get. A printout from the store of the clothing items she is looking at, showing that this is a cost effective purchase, would be appropriate for verification.

Benefits; TA-DVS Rule

[461-135-1230](tel:461-135-1230) — Benefits; TA-DVS Rule

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