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Cynthia D. LaWare, Secretary

TO: Commissioners and Senior Departmental Staff
FROM: Steven M. Gold, Deputy Secretary
DATE: July 27, 2006
SUBJECT: Clarifications of AHS Consumer Reimbursement Policy

Several questions have come up related to the AHS Consumer Reimbursement Policy dated May 18, 2006. I would like to take this opportunity to clarify several key points.

How does this impact groups not currently receiving reimbursement?

If a Department feels there is a valuable consumer perspective absent from a board or working body and that given the circumstances, a stipend may help recruitment, it may choose to offer a stipend. Any such stipend will be funded from within existing fiscal resources of the Department.

If a consumer who is currently part of a board that does not offer stipends, requests a stipend, the request will include a justification of need (lost wages, unreimbursed expenses that pose a fiscal hardship, etc). Requests will be honored at the Commissioner's discretion within existing departmental fiscal resources.

Does this new policy pertain to Governors Commissions or Gubernatorial appointed bodies or legislatively mandated entities?

Governor's Commissions, Gubernatorial or legislatively appointed boards must take direction from the Governor's Office Executive Order or the legislation that created the entity.

Accessible meeting and materials.

The policy states that, "AHS will make every effort to make meetings and materials accessible to all members." This statement refers to both physical location of the meetings as well meeting materials, handouts, presentation formats, the pacing of meeting agenda's, tape recording or other technological accommodations. Additionally, State policy requires state business to be conducted in facilities that are accessible to Vermonters with disabilities. We expect all AHS member departments and offices to follow State policy. The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation's website provides information about locations that meet the definition of accessible. <http://www.vocrehabvermont.org/>.

Stipends for Attending Meetings & Out of State Meal Reimbursement

The last sentence of paragraph two, under “background”, states that this policy is meant to provide “minimal guidance”. Departments may choose to offer higher stipends or out of state meal reimbursement rates based on their specific needs for having consumers participate and fiscal resources.

State and Federally Mandated Rates

State or Federal legislation or policy that may provide more specific rate structures and payment requirements for a given group shall pre-empt this policy.