

# Participant Assistance Funds FAQ

## What are Participant Assistance Funds?

Participant assistance funds are an allowable expense category under the Behavioral Health Bridge Housing (BHBH) Program, under the broader housing navigation supports. As described in the [California Department of Health Care Services Behavioral Health Bridge Housing Program County Behavioral Health Agencies Request for Applications \(RFA\)](#), Participant Assistance Funds are used to remove barriers and support people with behavioral health conditions who are also experiencing homelessness to meet their immediate housing needs.

## What are some example uses of Participant Assistance Funds?

Examples include but are not limited to, costs associated with obtaining government-issued identification and other vital documents, housing application fees, credit reports, security deposits, and utility deposits. Funds may also be used to support move-in and establishing a household, including transportation, food, hygiene products, and moderate furnishings.

## What types of identification costs are allowable?

Participant Assistance Funds may be used to help someone obtain a driver's license or other state ID, birth certificate, or Social Security card if needed to prove identity and get into housing.

## What types of furnishings are allowable?

Moderate furnishings are an allowable use for the participant assistance funding (RFA, page 21). Moderate household furnishings could include a bed, tables and chairs, cleaning tools, and supplies – necessities that people need to settle into housing. BHBH projects are encouraged to work with participants to determine their needs and to seek out resources. Consider connecting with nonprofits and charitable organizations that offer access to furniture (e.g., Catholic Charities, Goodwill, American Red Cross, Salvation Army, Habitat for Humanity ReStores, and furniture banks).

## Is a BHA required to have written policies, procedures, and protocols for the use of Participant Assistance Funds?

Yes. If BHBH Program funds are used for participant assistance, county behavioral health agencies (BHAs) must submit their policies and procedures to the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) prior to drawing down these funds. Policies and procedures must include who is eligible; allowable costs; frequency of distribution; strategies for prevention of fraud, waste, and abuse; and required documentation.

## What are the limits on the use of Participant Assistance Funds?

Participant assistance funds are intended to be flexible. However, Participant Assistance Funds may be used only if no other funding source is available for the relevant expenses.

## Is an extra deposit for a client to have a dog an allowable use of Program Assistance funds if it is required by a property manager?

Yes. This could be an allowable expense, as it removes a critical barrier to accessing housing. However, landlords cannot charge an extra deposit for a documented service animal or emotional support animal.

## Could Participant Assistance Funds be used for individuals who are not yet currently staying in bridge housing?

Yes. Counties may consider flexible funding for basic necessities or to remove barriers to housing, including barriers to participation in BHBH bridge housing. Policies should reflect when and how Participant Assistance Funds may be used to assist individuals during progressive engagement and/or when individuals are not currently in bridge housing.