

Minnesota Office of Justice Programs (OJP)
Direct Client Assistance (DCA) Guidelines
January 2023

These guidelines are to inform OJP grantees who have funds budgeted for “Direct Client Assistance” of how to properly administer the funds, including the use of vendor cards. Following these guidelines will ensure that the funds are used for allowable expenses, are making the maximum impact, are being tracked appropriately, and are being reported correctly to OJP. Grantees must have a written internal policy in place that incorporates these guidelines to assist agency staff in administering DCA funds.

Allowable Expenses & Expense Limits

Allowable Expenses

- Refer to the grant program guidelines or other allowability guidelines (e.g., the *Budget Allocation Guide* for CVS grants) for your specific grant program for the type of DCA expenses that are allowable.
- Vendor cards are allowable to meet DCA needs if they are administered in adherence to the [Vendor Card Usage Policy](#).
- Always contact your grant manager if you are uncertain about the eligibility of a particular DCA expense.

Expense Limits

If the grant program guidelines or other allowability guidelines of the grant program do not specify DCA expense limits, consider the guidance below to maximize the impact your limited DCA funds can have:

- Connect clients to other resources in their community, such as emergency assistance, energy assistance, food shelves, churches, community groups/foundations and [Crime Victim Reparations](#).
- Does the client have the resources and a plan to continue payments for ongoing expenses (e.g., rent, utilities) after DCA is used initially? You may want to ensure a plan is in place for the client to continue payments after the DCA help.
- Is the client need related to the purpose of the particular grant program? For example, the need of a client being served by a CVS grantee must be related to a crime victimization they experienced.

Administering Process

Once an allowable DCA expense has been identified, it is important to have the proper approval and payment processes in place.

Approvals

- Approval of DCA expenses must be documented using an internal expense authorization form (such as the [Sample DCA Authorization Form](#)). This form can be in any format but must include the date, client ID, description of the items or services needed, reason for the assistance need (e.g., crime victimization), payment type and two agency staff signatures (e.g., the requestor and authorizer).
- All DCA expenses should have supporting documentation of the expense on file. Common types of documentation include a copy of a rental lease and rent due notice from a landlord, a utilities disconnection notice, or a receipt from a store purchase.

Payments

- Check and credit payments should be made directly to the vendor. Cash payments to vendors should be avoided.
- Check or cash payments directly to a client as reimbursement for a past expense or to pay off a current expense should also be avoided. In rare situations when payment to a client is a last resort, sufficient source documentation is required of the client (vendor invoice, proof of payment, etc.).
- Only in emergency situations should agency staff pay for DCA expenses using personal funds. If/when this situation arises, staff must fill out and submit an expense reimbursement form, along with an itemized receipt along with any other relevant documentation related to the expense.
- Distribution of vendor cards for client needs must follow the [Vendor Card Usage Policy](#).

Reporting

- DCA expenses should be reported on FSRs at least quarterly during the grant period using the same accounting method (cash or accrual) as all other agency expenses. Vendor cards can only be claimed for reimbursement upon distribution to a client, not when purchased (see [Vendor Card Usage Policy](#)).
- FSRs that include DCA line expenses should also include the [DCA Cover Sheet](#), if applicable to your grant program (e.g., CVS grants).