



Ponca Youth Fund

Previously known as Ponca Youth Enrichment Fund (PYEF)

Effective November 1, 2024

Purpose

The Ponca Tribe of Nebraska has established a Ponca Youth Fund to assist enrolled Ponca Tribe of Nebraska youth with their personal growth, success, and their ability to sustain a healthy lifestyle. This program is intended to enhance opportunities for youth by promoting their physical, emotional, mental, cultural, and spiritual well-being, ensuring they have access to activities, resources, and experiences that contribute to their overall growth and success.

Policy

The Ponca Tribe of Nebraska will provide an annual General Welfare benefit of up to **\$400 per eligible Tribal youth** to be used for enrichment activities, workforce development, educational opportunities, or other needs that support appropriate growth and development of the youth. This policy outlines the Ponca Tribe of Nebraska's intent to support and uplift Ponca youth, uphold Tribal values and traditions, and aligns with IRS General Welfare Exclusion guidelines (IRC §139E(a)).

Program Eligibility

Eligibility to receive funding will be determined as outlined below. It is the responsibility of the legal/custodial guardian or youth to ensure they meet the eligibility criteria prior to the eligibility determination dates.

Enrollment:

Youth must be currently enrolled in the Ponca Tribe of Nebraska and must be **ACTIVE** in the enrollment database on October 1st or April 1st of each calendar year.

Residency:

Youth must have a current address on file with the Enrollment Department.

Age:

Youth must not be older than twenty (20) years of age when eligibility lists are pulled on October 1st and April 1st of each calendar year.

Eligibility Determination:

Eligibility is determined twice annually. Enrollment will pull a list of all members that meet the above eligibility requirements on October 1st and April 1st of each year. Members who are not eligible on October 1st will not be eligible for disbursement during the first round. A second eligibility list will be pulled April 1st, and disbursements will be made to any newly eligible youth.

Funding

Availability of Funds:

Funds **MUST** be available for the current fiscal year. If at any time funds are not available, this program may be eliminated, suspended, or benefit amount reduced without prior notice to eligible youth.

Allocated Funding

Funding is allocated to the program annually by Tribal Council with the approval of the General Fund Budget. At the time this program is implemented Tribal Council has authorized funding for all eligible members at \$400.00 per fiscal year. The fiscal year (FY) begins on October 1st and ends on September 30th of each year. Tribal Council may increase, decrease, or eliminate this amount within the General Fund budget without prior notice to eligible youth.

Frequency of Funding:

Ponca Tribe of Nebraska youth are eligible for disbursements once per fiscal year.

Funding Disbursements:

Funding disbursements will occur twice per fiscal year. All members that are eligible under the program on October 1st, will receive a disbursement prior to December 15th. Any member that was not eligible for the program on October 1st, but does become eligible by April 1st, will receive a disbursement prior to June 15th. Youth that do receive the first disbursement will not be eligible to receive a second disbursement in the same fiscal year.

Items & Activities

Eligible Items & Activities

This program is designed to meet the unique needs of every Ponca youth. The Ponca Tribe of Nebraska acknowledges that each youth has their own dreams, goals, and ambitions. By establishing this fund, we aim to support important areas often overlooked due to financial barriers, such as physical, educational, or extracurricular activities. It is up to each legal/custodial guardian or youth to decide how best to use the funds to support their personal growth and aspirations.

**Meal plans at an institute for higher education is allowable as it is not considered household groceries.*

Ineligible Items & Activities

The funds provided under the Ponca Youth Program prohibits the use of funds for illegal substances, alcohol, and tobacco products (except when tobacco is required for ceremonial purposes). Additionally, any activity or purchase deemed illegal under Tribal, federal, or state law is strictly prohibited from utilizing this funding. These guidelines ensure the funds are used responsibly to promote the well-being and development of our youth.

Funds cannot be used for regular household expenses (e.g., rent, utilities, household groceries) or items that do not directly relate to or benefit the youth's development.

Accountability & Restrictions

The Ponca Youth Fund will maintain records of all disbursements, including documentation provided by recipients. Periodic audits may be conducted to ensure appropriate use of funds. Audits may require legal/custodial guardians or youth to submit a brief report or feedback on how the funds were used, including the impact of the activities on their personal growth and development.

To receive disbursement from the Ponca Youth Fund Program, the parent must have legal/custodial guardianship of the youth receiving the funding. Any concerns regarding guardianship or disputes regarding guardianship will place the youth account on restriction from disbursement until legal/custodial guardianship can be verified. Legal/custodial guardians must provide documentation confirming their guardianship status when applying for program benefits. This ensures that the funds are managed appropriately and used in the best interest of the child's development and well-being. Guardians who have pre-existing custodial/legal guardianship rulings will need to contact Ponca Tribe of Nebraska Enrollment prior to the distribution dates to update their youth's records.

**It is the responsibility of the custodial/legal guardian to ensure enrollment records are up to date and accurate anytime a change in custody or legal guardianship occurs.*

Termination of Benefits

If any guardian or youth are found to have used the funds inappropriately or provide false information, they may be required to repay the funds, and their eligibility for future benefits may be suspended or revoked.

Disbursement of Funds

In order to streamline the process of disbursing Ponca Youth Funding to youth or their legal/custodial guardians, the Ponca Tribe of Nebraska has engaged a 3rd party vendor. Eligibility lists will be provided to the 3rd party vendor and disbursements will be processed and managed by the 3rd party vendor in accordance with the approved policies. Any disputes or questions should be directed to the authorized vendor for resolution.

There will not be an application process for receiving Ponca Youth Funds. Eligible members will be provided an enrollment window to select their preferred disbursement method. If no election is made, all eligible members will receive a paper check.

Payment Methods

The authorized vendor selected to administer this program will provide all eligible youth or their legal/custodial guardian with multiple avenues to receive the funds. Legal/custodial guardian or

youth will refer to the benefit program announcement for instruction on enrolling in the online portal.

ACH Deposit

The legal/custodial guardian or youth may enroll in ACH Deposit through the 3rd party vendor. ACH deposit will require the legal/custodial guardian or youth to set up an on-line account using the vendors payment portal. The legal/custodial guardian will be responsible for verifying accurate and complete information is provided to the vendor for ACH deposits.

Reloadable Visa/Mastercard Debit

The legal/custodial guardian or youth may request a reloadable card to utilize the available funding during each funding cycle. The youth or legal/custodial guardian will keep the reloadable card for funds to be added during each eligibility period. If the card is lost or stolen, the youth or legal/custodial guardian is responsible for notifying the vendor. An additional card may be sent out at an additional cost to the youth or legal/custodial guardian.

Check

If no selection is made or no account is set-up, the vendor will mail paper checks to all eligible youth in the name of their legal/custodial guardian or in the event the youth is over the age of majority, the check will be in their name.

Payment Disputes

Any payment disputes will be initiated by the youth or their legal/custodial guardian directly to the 3rd party vendor. The 3rd party vendor will cancel, and re-issue checks as needed and investigate any ACH or Visa/Mastercard fraud disputes. Members will be responsible for securing their reloadable card and ensuring their PIN is secure. The 3rd party vendor will work directly with the youth or their legal/custodial guardian to reissue any lost or stolen reloadable cards, as long as the card has been reported lost or stolen with the vendor.

Transition Period

During the transition period from Ponca Youth Enrichment Fund to the Ponca Youth Fund, any member that has previously utilized their PYEF funding will be eligible for the difference in funding only. Ponca Tribe of Nebraska Human Services staff will stop offering PYEF appointments on October 31, 2024. On November 1, 2024, a complete list of all PYEF applications processed will be provided to the finance department. Eligible member list will be pulled on November 1, 2024, only during the transition period. All other eligibility dates will follow the approved policy indicated above.