

EFFECTIVE: March 16, 2010

SUPERCEDES: February 16, 2006

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I. POLICY – TUITION REIMBURSEMENT/EDUCATION ASSISTANCE

Education reimbursement and/or release time is provided to employees who voluntarily undertake and successfully complete education programs relevant to their current work or projected work responsibilities. The purpose of the program is to allow employees an opportunity to further their education and develop and improve their skills for the workplace.

Educational reimbursement and/or release time for employee-initiated education is based on the availability of funds and staffing needs. Department policies regarding employee training and education will follow all applicable administrative procedures, IRS tax laws, and the provisions of collective bargaining agreements and plans.

II. SCOPE

This policy applies to all full-time and eligible part-time employees who have completed their probationary employment period with the department, and are meeting their division's standards for work performance.

III. GENERAL PROVISIONS

A. QUALIFICATIONS

1. To qualify for reimbursement and/or release time, courses of study must bear a relationship to the general field of business activity in which the employee is engaged or likely to become engaged while employed at the Department of Administration or the state. If the employee wishes to earn a degree or program certificate, certain courses of study which are prerequisites to that degree or certificate may also qualify for reimbursement, provided the major field of study bears the aforementioned relationship.

Although a degree or certificate program may be deemed unrelated to the general field of business in which the employees is currently engaged or likely to become engaged while at the department or the state, certain classes within the degree or certificate program may be considered mutually beneficial to the employee and the department and may, at the discretion of the Department's Training Coordinator, qualify for reimbursement.

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2. Approved courses must either be a requirement in a degree-oriented program or one requiring class attendance, and must be offered by an accredited school.
3. Employees are not reimbursed or approved release time for those courses designed to meet aesthetic, cultural, or recreational purposes.
4. The course must be within the demonstrated abilities or developmental potential of the employee.
5. Part-time employees are eligible for a prorated reimbursement or release time based on the percentage of time worked.
6. Questions concerning the acceptability of a course are to be discussed with the Department's Training Coordinator **PRIOR** to an employee enrolling in a course.

B. REIMBURSEMENT

1. Reimbursement is made after the employee submits evidence of payments made, and evidence that the course was completed with a grade of "C" or better or "pass" in a pass/fail course or a certificate of completion.
2. Reimbursement is made for degree program coursework and/or coursework requiring attendance at an accredited institution. Reimbursement ranges from 0%-100% of the tuition for up to **two** approved courses per semester. The amount of reimbursement will be based on the following:
 - A course taken to maintain or improve skills needed in the employee's current job is reimbursed at up to 100%.
 - A course taken that has a reasonable relationship to the department's business, to a future career within the department and/or is required as part of a degree program (the degree must relate to the department's business) is reimbursed at up to 75%.
 - Degree programs and courses that will prepare an employee for another job or career in state government is reimbursement at up to 50%.

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- The percentage of reimbursement and/or release time for employee-initiated education is based on the availability of funds and staffing needs.
3. Employees in degree programs are encouraged to attend classes at a public college or university. If an employee chooses to attend a private institution, tuition reimbursement will be based on the tuition cost for a similar program at a public institution.
 4. Release time can be made in lieu of or in addition to tuition reimbursement up to 40 hours in any continuous twelve-month period at the discretion of the supervisor and the Training Coordinator. Time release is authorized leave from the worksite during an employee's normal working hours, which includes time spent in attendance in the class and the necessary travel to and from the course site. At the discretion of the Human Resources Director, more than forty hours per year may be granted. No overtime will be paid for participation in education assistance.
 5. The costs of course related, access, or technology fees, non-related fees, textbooks, transportation, technology activity, student activity, parking, equipment or other materials designed for use in conjunction with the course are not reimbursable.
 6. Employees who receive other forms of assistance (for example: VA benefits, G.I. Bill, grants, or private scholarships) must apply that money to their tuition fees before requesting education assistance from the department. Employees eligible for tuition support from other sources will not be considered for reimbursement from the department, which results in payment in excess of 100% from all sources.
 7. Any person whose employment terminates for any reason prior to the completion of an approved course forfeits any reimbursement under this policy.
 8. There is no reimbursement for course work in which the employee enrolled prior to receiving the appropriate approval or prior to being employed by the Department of Administration.

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9. Employees receiving an incomplete in an approved course must complete the course requirements within three months of the originally scheduled course completion date in order to remain eligible for reimbursement.

C. APPLICATION/REIMBURSEMENT PROCEDURE

Employee

1. Discuss your educational goals and related coursework with your supervisor and Department's Training Coordinator.
2. Complete a Tuition Reimbursement/Release Time Authorization form; obtain written approval from his/her supervisor and division budget manager **PRIOR** to enrolling in a class.
3. Complete the class and receive grade report.
4. Request reimbursement by submitting copies of the Tuition Reimbursement/Release Time Authorization form, a copy of the school's fee statement/proof of payment, and a copy of the grade report to Department's Training Coordinator. Requests must be made within 90 days of the date the course is completed. A delay in submitting the reimbursement request and supporting documentation in excess of the three months will result in non-payment.

Manager/Supervisor

1. Discuss educational goals and related coursework with employees interested in the educational assistance program and when possible budget for educational reimbursement requests.
2. Determine if tuition reimbursement requests meet the criteria established in this policy and/or if funding is available.
3. Approve or deny tuition reimbursement requests. If both the supervisor and budget manager approve the request, sign and forward the form to the Training Coordinator. If the request is denied, return the form to the employee and explain the reason for denying the request.

Training Coordinator

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1. Discuss educational goals and related coursework with employees interested in the educational assistance program and explain the program policy.
2. Approve or deny requests based on the criteria established in this policy. If the request is approved, indicate the dollar amount and/or release time approved, sign the form and forward a copy to the employee. If the request is denied, forward a copy of the form to the employee with the reason for denying the request.
3. Track reimbursement and provide reports to management.

IV. REFERENCES

Minnesota Statute 43A.21

Department of Employee Relations Administrative Procedures 21

Collective Bargaining Agreements