



Tuition Reimbursement Policy September 2015

Pursuant to Texas Government Code Section 656.047, the Texas Health and Human Services System policy for tuition reimbursement is provided below.

Authorization

The Texas Government Code, Chapter 656, State Employees Training Act, authorizes state agencies to use public funds to provide training and education to employees when such programs are related to the employee's duties or prospective duties.

Policy

If funds are available, an eligible employee may receive tuition reimbursement for courses (including online courses) completed while attending a vocational school, technical school, college, or university.

Reimbursement for tuition charged by a private college or university must not exceed the tuition amount charged by a comparable public college or university for the same courses.

The courses must:

- relate to current or prospective job duties; and
- benefit the HHS System by increasing employee knowledge, understanding and skills needed to achieve HHS goals and objectives.

Note: Tuition reimbursement does **not** cover the cost of:

- elective fees,
- books,
- materials,
- supplies,
- late fees,
- deposits,
- parking fees, or

- travel.

Exceptions

Employees serving at the pleasure of the Executive Commissioner for Health and Human Services or an Agency Head are not eligible to receive tuition reimbursement. For more information, see Chapter 3, General Employment (B. Position Appointments; Serving at the Pleasure of the Executive Commissioner for Health and Human Services or an HHS Agency Head).

In addition, this policy does not apply to:

- Qualified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (QVRC) Program (DARS only);
- Adult Protective Services Professional Education Program (DFPS only);
- Title IV-E Training Program (DFPS only);
- DSHS Preventative Medicine – Public Health Residency Program (DSHS only);
- Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) Program (DADS only); and
- other courses taken that are not part of a degree track leading to a degree.

For more information on these programs, see the following:

- The DARS Business Procedures Manual, Section 2.17 (Qualified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (QVRC) Program);
- The DFPS Center for Learning and Organizational Excellence (CLOE) Handbook:
 - Section 4500 Educational Programs – Tuition Reimbursement and Federally Funded Training,
 - Appendix III, The APS Professional Education Program, and
 - Appendix IV: CPS Title IV-E University Training Program for New Hires;
- The DFPS Title IV-E Training Contracts Financial Handbook, Section 4000, Title IV-E Training Contracts with Universities; and
- The DSHS Preventive Medicine – Public Health Residency Program website.

Eligibility

If funds are available, an employee may receive tuition reimbursement for courses completed while attending a vocational school, technical school, college, or university if:

- the employee has successfully completed his or her probationary period,
- the employee is not on an active second- or third-level reminder in the Positive Performance System,

- the employee has not received a disciplinary action in the last 12 months, and
- the employee has an overall rating of at least "Competent" (3) on his or her most recent performance evaluation.

Requirements

An employee may be reimbursed upon providing proof of satisfactory course completion.

Satisfactory course completion must be documented by an official grade slip or transcript that shows either:

- a final grade of:
 - "C" or above for undergraduate work, or
 - "B" or above for graduate work; or
- a "pass" grade (only for schools with a pass/fail system).

Requesting Tuition Reimbursement

An employee should request tuition reimbursement as far in advance as possible, but no later than 20 working days before the course is scheduled to begin.

An employee requests tuition reimbursement by:

- completing HR0809, Request for Educational Financial Assistance; and
- signing an HR0810, Tuition Obligation Agreement.

Note: For each semester of classes, an employee must submit a new HR0809 and sign a new HR0810.

The HR0810 includes the following conditions:

- the employee will only be reimbursed after presenting evidence of successful completion of his or her course(s) for the semester;
- the employee will be reimbursed for the actual amount of tuition, as long as that amount does not exceed \$5,000 per fiscal year;
- for requests for more than \$5,000, the employee will be responsible for half of any amount that exceeds \$5,000 per fiscal year;
- the employee must continue to meet tuition reimbursement eligibility criteria and remain at an HHS agency after he or she completes the courses covered by the obligation agreement for an amount of time equal to the completed semester; and
- if the employee fails to continue to meet tuition reimbursement criteria or to remain with an HHS agency for the required time, he or she forfeits all rights to reimbursement under this program and will be required to pay the HHS agency that approves this agreement an

amount equal to the amount of tuition reimbursed to the employee.

These obligations may be waived if the Executive Commissioner for Health and Human Services finds that a waiver is:

- in the best interest of the HHS System, or
- warranted because of an extreme personal hardship suffered by the employee. Extreme personal hardship may include changes to employment status outside the employee's control, such as a reduction in force.

Note: An employee requesting tuition reimbursement and educational leave must also complete an HR0514, Employment Obligation Agreement, if he or she is requesting three or more months of educational leave. For more information, see Chapter 5, Work Leave (N. Educational Leave; Employment Obligation Agreement).

Approving Tuition Reimbursement

All requests for tuition reimbursement are reviewed by the Tuition Reimbursement Committee, which includes the:

- HHS Chief Deputy Executive Commissioner,
- HHS Chief of Staff,
- HHS Deputy Executive Commissioner for System Support Services,
- HHS Director of Human Resources, and
- a representative from the agency that employs the requester.

The Executive Commissioner for Health and Human Services considers the Committee's recommendation and decides whether to partially or fully authorize the tuition reimbursement payment.

Tuition Reimbursement and Transfers

If an employee approved for tuition reimbursement transfers within an HHS agency or to another HHS agency before completing the approved semester of classes, the tuition reimbursement approval will remain in effect. Upon providing proof of satisfactory course completion, the HHS agency that originally approved the tuition reimbursement is responsible for reimbursing the employee.

Exception: If an employee is transferred from one HHS agency to another HHS agency by legislative directive, the receiving agency is responsible for reimbursing the employee.