

EDUCATIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL REIMBURSEMENT PROGRAM

- AUTHORITY:** County of Orange Personnel and Salary Resolution (**dated 01/10/2003**) – Article III, Sections 1-5
Memo from Auditor-Controller - Educational & Professional Reimbursement Program Changes, dated **11/21/2007**
- RESCINDS:** Procedure Manual Item 1-2-107, dated 12/30/11
- FORMS:** [Educational and Professional Reimbursement Program Request](#)
[County of Orange – Educational and Professional Reimbursement Claim Form](#)
- PURPOSE:** To provide a method of requesting/**claiming** educational and professional reimbursement for a variety of opportunities taken by departmental staff.

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

A. Policy

1. It is the policy of the Department to encourage personnel to continue relevant professional and academic training through a variety of opportunities. An educational and professional reimbursement program has been adopted by the County to pay a portion of the cost of programs that benefit both the County and the employee. In order to qualify for the program, one or more of the following criteria must be met:
 - a. Related to the work of the employee's position or occupation.
 - b. Prepares the employee to transition to an alternate County occupation.
 - c. Prepares the employee for advancement to position of greater responsibility in the County.
2. In addition, items eligible for reimbursement must have the reasonable potential for contributing to achieving County business objectives.

B. Eligibility

1. All full time regular, part time regular, limited term, and probationary employees performing their jobs satisfactorily are eligible for reimbursement. Extra-help employees are not eligible.
2. The following are eligible for reimbursement:
 - a. Courses related to obtaining a degree (AA, BA, BS, Masters, **or** Ph.D.).

- b. Accredited certificate programs.
 - c. Vocational skills programs.
 - d. Courses related to obtaining or maintaining a business-related certification, licenses, or accreditation.
 - e. Courses related to preparing to take tests to obtain business-related certification, licenses, or accreditation.
 - f. Professional conferences, conventions, and seminars that are related to business objectives.
 - g. Fees related to obtaining and/or renewing a license, including special service driver's licenses.
 - h. Fees related to certifications or accreditations.
 - i. Fees related to taking professional examinations.
 - j. Professional association membership fees.
3. In general, any courses taken through the program must be taken on employee time. However, at the discretion of the Department Head, a course may be taken on County time when it specifically meets a business need and is not available during the employee's non-work hours.
4. Courses are not eligible for reimbursement if they:
- a. Are taken to bring unsatisfactory performance up to an acceptable level.
 - b. Are taken to acquire skills or knowledge which the employee was deemed to have when appointed.
 - c. Duplicate available in-service training.
 - d. Duplicate training which the employee has already received.

C. Nature of Reimbursement

- 1. Reimbursement may be made for all required fees, registration, and other costs related directly to the approved educational or professional expense. This may include, but is not limited to books, class materials, lab fees, testing fees, parking, processing fees, etc.
- 2. Expenses for travel, meals, and lodging are not reimbursable; however, the Department Head may authorize payment for these items when it meets their business needs and is budgeted in their travel expense budget.
- 3. For degree programs, reimbursement shall be made to the employee upon completion of the course with a minimum final grade of C or equivalent in an undergraduate course, or B or equivalent in a graduate level course.

4. Reimbursement for non-graded courses shall be made upon completion of an approved course and proof of payment.
5. Any conference reimbursed under the Educational and Professional Reimbursement program should be attended for the employee's professional development and on the employee's own time. If the Department requires an employee to attend a conference, but does not pay for the costs "up front" and does pay the employee's hours, **reimbursement may be requested via Mileage and Other Expenses claim form (refer to PMI 1-5-210).**
6. If an employee is receiving reimbursement from another source that covers a portion of the cost, the County will only pay the remaining amount, after other reimbursements are exhausted.
7. **The maximum reimbursement limit is \$10,000 per fiscal year to the eligible employees of the following MOUs:**
 - a. **Administrative Management Unit (Adoption date – 06/21/2019)**
 - b. **Community Services Unit (Adoption date – 10/22/2019)**
 - c. **County General Unit (Adoption date – 10/22/2019)**
 - d. **Office Services Unit (Adoption date – 10/22/2019)**
 - e. **Supervising Management Unit (Adoption date – 10/22/2019)**
 - f. **Public Safety General Unit and Public Safety Supervisory Unit (Adoption date – 03/08/2022)**

II. PROCEDURE

A. Requesting Tuition Reimbursement

1. The employee requesting tuition reimbursement should obtain the Department request form on [REDACTED]. Employees should complete the form online, print it out, sign it, and submit it to their supervisor who, in turn, will fill out the supervisor's part. The form goes to the **Division** Director to fill out the Director's portion and submit the form to Executive Management (EM). After approval, EM sends the form to the Secretary to log and forwards to the Tuition Reimbursement Coordinator for processing.
2. **The Educational and Professional Reimbursement Program Request must be submitted within thirty (30) days of the starting date of the class(es) to be considered for approval.**
3. The Tuition Reimbursement Coordinator will return approved requests to the **requestor via email along with an explanation of the reimbursement claim submission** process upon course completion. The actual claim form with explanation how to complete is available on [REDACTED].

4. Requests denied will be returned to the employee with an explanation for the action taken.
 - a. Requests that have been denied may be appealed through the established chain of command.

B. Tuition Reimbursement Claim

1. Upon completion of an approved course or payment of fees (for approved membership, license, certification, or accreditation), the employee shall complete the online claim form on [REDACTED] print it out and sign (**e-signature is unacceptable**). The employee should attach proof of payment and proof of completion (where applicable), **then** send the claim packet as soon as possible to the Tuition Reimbursement Coordinator. The Tuition Reimbursement Coordinator will log, initial, and file the original claim packet and forward the original face sheet with copy of the support documentation to EM for approval. The claim **form** will be signed by one of the Department's authorized signers (the Chief or **designee**).
2. Claim forms and pertinent backup documentation (**refer to guidelines listed under "References"**) must be submitted to the Department Head as soon as possible, but no later than one (**1**) year after completion **of the course**.
3. The employee shall furnish the required documentation to the Department Head in accordance with the requirements of the Auditor-Controller **Compliance** unit including:
 - a. Filling out the claim form in its entirety.
 - b. Having original signatures on the form – both employee and authorized signers.
 - c. Supply original documentation that shows the staff's name, school or provider's name, semester/year or dates of attendance, titles of opportunity taken, and invoice costs (of enrollment, registration, program, course, units, or membership fees – not payments on account).
4. Upon approval by the Department Head (or designee) and receipt of claim form, the Auditor-Controller shall issue a warrant to the employee for reimbursement.
5. Employees not completing courses previously approved for tuition reimbursement or terminating employment prior to completion shall notify the Tuition Reimbursement Coordinator immediately.

REFERENCES:

Policy: 1-5-210 County Travel and Mileage and Other Expenses Claiming
Procedure

[Educational and Professional Reimbursement Program – Department Backup
Documentation Requirements
Guide to Completing Educational and Professional Reimbursement Claim Form](#)

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APPROVED BY: