

Educational Assistance Checklist

Please ensure you have completed the following before sending your Request for Tuition Reimbursement to HR.

- Ensure your documentation is submitted within 60 calendar days from the course end date.
- Ensure the amount you are requesting is eligible for reimbursement (Max \$1,250.00 per fiscal year)
- Tuition Reimbursement form is complete
 - Must include employee information and appropriate supervisor signature
- Provide the following documentation to HR with your completed Request for Tuition Reimbursement:
 - Completed Tuition Reimbursement form
 - Official Receipt from School containing the following:
 - School Name
 - Term/Session
 - Method of Payment
 - Paid reimbursement amount (Reimbursement amount does not include any funds which are not required to be repaid (i.e. Veteran's Administration, GI Bill, grants, scholarships, etc.)
 - Documentation from institution with grade (numerical or letter), or Certificate of Completion for the course(s) taken.
 - Documentation from institution with course/training/instruction date. **Must include the Start Date and End Date of the course(s) term or session.**

Refer to Section 105.5 of the Orange County Policy Manual & Operational Regulations for specific information and policy regarding Educational Assistance.

105.3 Non-In-the-Line of Duty Death

The deceased employee's spouse and dependents are eligible for continued coverage in the County's group insurance plan under the guidelines of COBRA.

105.4 Leave Stretching During School Breaks

Employees of Head Start who are unemployed during the school break periods will be allowed to use a part of their accrued personal leave to fund the employee portion of health insurance premiums during this period. The County will continue to pay the County's portion of the health insurance premiums during this period. If an employee has no personal leave balance, the employee may make personal payment for their portion of the premium to the Payroll Department by each respective pay date. This policy only applies to the Head Start Division.

105.5 Educational Assistance

Employees are encouraged to continue their formal academic education in areas that shall enhance their contribution to County service. When funding is available the Educational Assistance Program reimburses full-time regular, executive, and Mayor/Commission staff employees for tuition expenses which have been paid by employees upon the successful completion of pre-approved coursework and training. This growth opportunity is intended to mutually benefit the County and the employee through enhancement of job performance and future potential. The Board of County Commissioners determines funding for the Educational Assistance Program annually. Employees receiving tuition reimbursement must remain employed by the Orange County Board of County Commissioners for twelve (12) months following the date of the most recent date of completion or the employee must repay the amount of reimbursement. No reimbursement is required if separation is due to layoff, involuntary termination or non-reappointment. Some departments (i.e. Corrections) may have more stringent guidelines based on Florida State Statutes regarding repayment.

105.6 Florida Retirement System/DROP

Eligible employees are covered by the Florida Retirement System (FRS). The County and eligible employee are required, by the State, to contribute specified amounts to the retirement fund. Regular eligible employees can review plan descriptions regarding information on contribution, creditable and continuous service, designation of beneficiary, normal retirement requirements, Deferred Retirement Option Program (DROP), and disability and death benefits at the Florida Retirement System Website or the Human Resources Division.

OPERATIONAL REGULATIONS

Benefits

105 General

Any changes to medical, dental or vision insurance coverage must be made through the Human Resources Division within sixty (60) calendar days of a qualifying event, or during the designated annual open enrollment period (in accordance with Internal Revenue Code, Section 125 guidelines).

- Employees desiring to participate in the Deferred Compensation Plan may contact a Human Resources Representative for the name and telephone number of the Deferred Compensation Plan provider.
- The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a confidential, County-paid benefit, which may provide emotional, vocational, financial and other counseling services. It is available to all employees and family members living within the employee's household. Employees may contact the provider directly or be referred by a supervisor.
- Participation in the employee assistance program cannot be mandated. If a supervisory referral is initiated, EAP will notify the supervisor of the employee's attendance at the scheduled meeting. The provider cannot give any further information without the employee's written consent. Employees cannot be disciplined for refusing to participate in a supervisory referral to EAP.

105.2,3 In-the-line and Non-in-the-line of Duty Death

Upon the reported death of an employee, the Human Resources Division, along with Parks and Recreation, will facilitate the planting of a memorial tree and plaque in a County park or Green Place.

105.5 Educational Assistance

Courses from institutions of higher education which are taken and which directly enhance the employee's current job title will be reimbursed.

Degree-seeking coursework contributing to the completion of a degree of higher education (associates, bachelors, masters, etc.) must be accredited by an agency recognized by the United States Department of Education (USDE) or the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA).

Certifications or licensure programs will be administered through the department and will not be reimbursed with Education Assistance funds.

Upon successful completion of the coursework, the employee must submit a Request for Educational Assistance and a receipt for tuition paid to their departmental Human Resources representative no later than sixty (60) calendar days after successful completion of the course.

OPERATIONAL REGULATIONS

Benefits

105.5 Educational Assistance (*Continued*)

Successful completion of coursework is defined as having earned a grade of "C" or better on an alphabetic scale, the equivalent on a numerical scale or a grade of "passing" on a pass/fail rating system.

Educational Assistance reimburses for tuition costs (books are not included) and costs incurred in the registration process for the course(s) meeting the completion definition outlined above. No employee may receive more than one thousand two hundred and fifty dollars (\$1,250.00) per fiscal year in reimbursements. Part-time employees who normally work less than thirty-five (35) hours per week may receive a maximum of six hundred and twenty-five dollars (\$625.00) per fiscal year in reimbursements.

Reimbursement is made only to employees, after completion of the six (6) month initial hire probationary period who are on active payroll upon successful completion of coursework and submission of reimbursement paperwork.

When Veterans Administration, educational grants, or other sources cover tuition, only the portion not covered by such funding may be reimbursed through this program. This does not include loans.

If the employee separates from County employment prior to twelve (12) months of service from the date of course completion, the amount paid to the employee for reimbursement may be withheld from the employee's final payment.

Employees may utilize personal leave to attend classes during regular work hours when approved by the division manager/designee if the course is not available during non-work hours and the employee's absence from the work place does not create undue hardship and loss of productivity.

Reimbursement requests should be pre-approved by an HR Representative to ensure coursework qualifies.

105.6 Florida Retirement System/Deferred Retirement Option Program

Upon election of the Florida Retirement System's (FRS) Deferred Retirement Option Program (DROP), an eligible employee may be paid for personal leave hours, at the employee's current base hourly rate of pay, up to the number of hours allowable in accordance with Florida Retirement Service and County guidelines. The employee shall continue to accrue and use personal leave as outlined in Policy 301 of this Manual. Upon separation from County service the employee's payout for unused Personal Leave will be limited to the maximum number of hours determined by the length of service, at the onset of DROP, minus the number of hours paid out at the time of DROP election.

The number of personal hours selected for payout will be paid the pay period prior to the start of DROP participation.