

ROCKINGHAM COUNTY
EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE REIMBURSEMENT PROGRAM

OBJECTIVE:

Rockingham County strongly encourages employees to pursue additional formal education and believes it has a positive impact on an employee's contribution to the County. The County supports self-development and educational efforts that will enhance an employee's knowledge and skills, thus improving potential for future opportunities within the County.

DEFINITIONS:

- Minimum eligibility – one year of continuous benefit-eligible service
- Matriculating – course work leading to a degree
- Nonmatriculating – course work that does not lead to a degree
- Review Committee – comprises of (1) Division Director, Human Resources Director and (1) Board of Commissioner.

SCOPE OF POLICY:

Rockingham County will provide educational assistance reimbursement, prorated based on regularly scheduled hours worked, to all eligible employees subject to personnel policies, who have completed one year of continuous service as a benefit-eligible employee. In order to maintain eligibility, employees must remain on the active payroll as a benefit-eligible employee and be performing their job satisfactorily through completion of each course.

Under this program employees may pursue a degree or take individual courses at approved and accredited educational institutions (matriculating or nonmatriculating) under this program, provided the course of study is related to the employee's current position or a probable future assignment within their respective division and the County approves the course(s).

While the Educational Assistance Reimbursement Program is expected to enhance an employee's performance and professional abilities, Rockingham County cannot guarantee that participation in this program will entitle the employee to advancement, a different job assignment, or pay increase.

Class attendance and completion of study assignments shall be accomplished outside of the employee's regular working hours.

Written requests for educational assistance reimbursement must be approved prior to enrollment.

The County will not pay for the employee to retake a course.

COVERED EXPENSES:

Subject to availability of funds, and on a first come first serve basis, expenses eligible for reimbursement include tuition, registration and required fees such as building use and lab fees. Education Assistance reimbursement for higher education courses will be on a sliding scale as follows:

- Ninety percent (90%) for a grade A (or "Pass" in the case of Pass/Fail courses).
- Eighty percent (80%) for a grade B
- Seventy percent (70%) for a grade C

Reimbursement not to exceed \$2,000 per year.

Other miscellaneous expenses, such as parking, travel or commuting, supplies, social dues, athletic fees, computer access charges, etc. are not reimbursable. County reimbursement will be reduced by any other financial aid that does not have to be repaid (such as the GI Bill, scholarships and grants).

Rockingham County has sole discretion in determining whether a course relates to an employee's current job duties or a foreseeable future position. Employees should contact the Human Resources Department for more information or questions about Educational Assistance Reimbursement Program.

Employees are required to remain in their department and in the employ of Rockingham County for a period of 1 year following the completion of each course. The total County contribution will be forgiven at one-quarter (1/4) of the total contribution per three (3) month period. At the end of twelve (12) months following the completion of each course, and of continued benefits-eligible employment the debt will be forgiven.

FUNDING:

The Board of Commissioners reserves the right to determine the annual budgetary amount for the Educational Assistance Program. Upon passage of the annual Delegation approved Rockingham County budget, funds will be made available. The County reserves the right to distribute any available funds for this program.

PROCEDURE:

- A. An application form must be completed before the beginning of the course and submitted to the Department Head and/or Supervisor for consideration. (Forms may be obtained from the Human Resource Department). Applications will be reviewed with consideration, relevancy of course to employee's job, tenure, personnel record, job performance, as well as budgetary constraints at time of submission. Application/s will be applicable for 6 months from date of Board of Commissioner's approval.
- B. The application form will be reviewed by the O/DD and comments will be submitted to the Review Committee with the original application. The Review Committee will insure that the request meets the Terms referenced above.
- C. If recommended for approval by the Review Committee, the application will be submitted with a recommendation for pre-qualified approval, or reimbursement approval depending on the timeframe submitted, to the Human Resources Department to bring forward for consideration by the Board of Commissioners. If denied, the application will be returned to the employee with the reason for denial and O/DD comments attached.
- D. If approved by the Board of Commissioners, a copy of the approved application form will be sent to the employee as official notice of approval.
- E. At time of registration the employee will pay full cost of the tuition.
- F. Reimbursable expenses must be submitted for payment within 60 days from the end of each course. An official grade record and/or certification of completion and itemized receipt/s documenting all of the expenses need to be submitted for reimbursement. Reimbursement will not be processed without this information.
- G. The Human Resources Department will develop the warrant based on the Committee's recommendation and submit to the Board of Commissioners' Office for final approval and submission to the Finance Department.
- H. Official grade record/s and/or certificate/s of completion will be added to the employee's personnel file at the conclusion of the class.

An employee who does not complete his/her course prior to the end of employment (inclusive of involuntary termination) will not be eligible for reimbursement. Individuals leaving benefits eligible employment will be required to repay the County for any outstanding liabilities per the terms described herein.

This policy is a broad guideline developed by the County to assist with organizational decisions. The procedures detail how the policy should be applied. It is not possible to address every situation or circumstance, and decisions regarding this benefit will be made on a case-by-case basis. Rockingham County will make every effort to ensure that all employees are treated fairly and equitably. Please contact the Human Resources Department at 603-679-9337, regarding any questions about the Educational Assistance Program.

Policy Effective Date: 11 / 01 / 2017

Approved by Board of Commissioners: 11 / 01 / 2017