

**COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE, CALIFORNIA
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS POLICY**

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Policy:

A. Through the Departments

It shall be the policy of the Board of Supervisors that an employee may be reimbursed the actual cost of tuition or registration fees upon successful completion of a course offered by an institution of higher learning, training facility, or following attendance of a workshop, seminar or institute, providing that such training is designed to improve the employee's effectiveness in performing his or her currently-assigned duties.

Subject to the availability of funds, reimbursement for such training may be authorized as follows:

Section. 1. By the Department Head

- a. When the tuition or registration fee is \$500.00 or less.
- b. When the cost of training, in any amount, is reimbursed from funds administered by state or federal agencies.

Section. 2. By the Human Resources Department and Executive Office

- a. When the tuition or registration fee is more than \$500.00 (for all training except training referred to in Sec. 1.(B) above).
- b. Such approval shall be obtained prior to the commencement of the training.

B. Through the Educational Support Program

In addition to reimbursement for training required in an employee's current position, support for education will be provided through the County's Educational Support Program, as described herein:

Section. 1 PURPOSE: To encourage and facilitate career development through a program whereby employees of the County are:

- a. Reimbursed for the costs of textbooks, tuition, registration, and laboratory fees for courses required to obtain an undergraduate or graduate degree, or a license or certification in an approved career development plan;
- b. Provided with a reduced work schedule while continuing to be paid as a full-time employee, to allow time to complete training or educational requirements for a degree or certification within an approved career development plan; or

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- c. Provided with alternative support to achieve educational and training goals within an approved development plan; or,
- d. Provided with educational loan repayment assistance as a hiring or retention incentive

Section. 2 **ELIGIBLE EMPLOYEES:** Regular full-time employees and part-time employees (on a pro rata basis) who have completed their initial probationary period, or have been hired for a position designated by the Human Resources Director as difficult to recruit and retain, are eligible to participate in this program. In addition, any temporary or Per Diem employee working in a nursing classification in any County agency/department who works a minimum of 520 hours in any fiscal year, may take advantage of the Educational Support Program. Temporary or Per Diem employees regularly scheduled to work less than 36 hours per week are eligible for a pro-rata level of reimbursement.

Section. 3 **PROGRAM ENTRY & PARTICIPATION:** For the Educational Loan Repayment Program employees will complete a request for loan repayment packet provided by their department. For all programs that provide support while the employee completes coursework towards a degree or certification, the following procedures apply:

- a. Employees who wish to receive support or participate in the program will complete an application and may be evaluated to determine aptitudes and personal value orientations related to the chosen field.
- b. Where appropriate, participants in the Educational Support Program will be interviewed and receive career development resources outlining the jobs to which they are most suited, availability of such jobs within the County organization, and requirements for job eligibility.
- c. A counselor will assess which jobs would be the best fit for the employee and counsel him/her how to achieve education, training, or experiential requirements for specific jobs. If educational funding is being requested, this plan will then be formalized in a proposed personal Career Development Plan.
- d. The sponsoring agency/department(s) and the Human Resources Department will review the applicants and their proposed plan for suitability prior to admittance to the program. Only those judged likely to succeed will be admitted, and placement will be on a first-come, first-served basis.

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- e. Participating employees will be responsible for participating in periodic counseling sessions to monitor progress in meeting the goals of their personal Career Development Plan.

Section. 4 **COURSES ELIGIBLE:** The following criteria will be used in determining eligibility for reimbursement:

- a. Undergraduate and graduate level coursework is eligible for reimbursement only if courses are required to obtain a degree, license, certificate or other qualification approved through the Educational Support Program.
- b. Courses must be satisfactorily completed. A grade of "C" or its equivalent is required for reimbursement of undergraduate coursework. A grade of "B" or its equivalent is required for reimbursement of graduate level coursework.
- c. Courses must be offered by an accredited educational institution that has been approved by the Human Resources Director or designee.
- d. Review courses may be eligible if approved by the Human Resources Director or designee.

Section. 5 **COURSES NOT ELIGIBLE FOR REIMBURSEMENT:**

- a. Those which are not required by an approved Career Development Plan.
- b. Those which duplicate training the employee has already received.
- c. Those which are not offered through an accredited educational institution that has been approved by the Human Resources Director or designee.

Section. 6 **TUITION & TEXTBOOK REIMBURSEMENT:**

- a. **Tuition & Textbook Reimbursement** – The County will provide one hundred percent (100%) reimbursement of tuition for job-related, or approved career-related courses, up to an annual maximum equal to the annual fees published by the University of California - Riverside for their degree coursework for each academic year, in accordance with the provisions of this program. Required textbooks, registration and laboratory fees will also be reimbursed at cost. [Annual reimbursement of expenses that exceed the annual limit permitted by Internal Revenue Code Section 127 will be treated as taxable income to the employee. Reimbursement of expenses for education received prior to employment will be treated as taxable income to the employee].

Section. 7 **20-20 WORK-SCHOOL PROGRAM**

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- a. Basic Structure of 20-20 Program – This program consists of an agreement that the County will provide paid release time for up to three years while the employee attends school full-time, participates in required fieldwork or clinical hours, and continues working at the County for 20 hours per week. In exchange, the employee signs an agreement requiring them to remain in County service for a minimum of one year, or prorated portion thereof, in exchange for each year of support provided to them while studying for the approved degree, licensing, or certification. after completion of their degree or certification. The rules regarding eligibility, program entry, and eligible coursework apply to this program as well.
- b. Agency/Department Commitment – The agency/department will be able to use companion positions or temporary employees through TAP to fill behind those in the 20-20 program

Section. 8 **OTHER FAST-TRACK EDUCATION OPTIONS**

Other fast-track programs in partnership with accredited colleges, including focused programs held on-site at the County's facilities and tuition discounts for County employees, will be developed within the Educational Support Program where possible. Participation in one of these programs may involve a 20-20 schedule, payment of eligible expenses, or another combination of monetary support and schedule accommodation, as determined by the Human Resources Director with the school and sponsoring departments.

Section. 9 **COSTS NOT COVERED**: In terms of both time and money, the following costs are not covered by this program:

- a. Courses are generally taken on the employee's own time, on compensatory time, vacation time, or annual leave approved in advance by the agency/department head. Agency/department heads are encouraged to adjust schedules whenever possible to allow employees to attend classes during regular work hours when necessary, including flextime hours. The 20-20 program and certain fast-track programs are exceptions to this general rule.
- b. Neither transportation nor mileage reimbursement are provided for by this program.
- c. Parking fees, meals, lodging and other costs not specifically covered in this program will not be paid by the County.
- d. Costs for which reimbursement is received from other sources (such as

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scholarships, grants, or certain other types of funding from Employer) are not reimbursable from the County. Reimbursements provided through this program will be considered the secondary pay source, and the Employee will only be eligible for Reimbursement for the difference between the amount received from the other funding sources and the actual Eligible Expense.

- e. Conventions, seminars, workshops and conferences, not qualifying as a required degree related course, are not covered by this reimbursement program.

Section. 10 EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION: The Human Resources Director will implement and administer this program, and will have the authority to administratively interpret its provisions. Approval of the Human Resources Department and preparation of an approved Career Development Plan are required conditions for reimbursement. Required documentation must be received by the Human Resources Director within sixty (60) days after completion of each academic term. New employees will not be reimbursed until they have completed their initial probationary period with the County. The Human Resources Director may develop such forms and additional procedures which are deemed necessary to accomplish the intent of this Educational Support program. Any or all sections of this program may be amended or discontinued at any time.

Section. 11 MANAGEMENT/EMPLOYEE PARTICIPATION CONDITIONS: In an effort to reasonably accommodate management and the participating employees, the following conditions will apply:

- a. The employee is responsible for performing current job assignments in addition to participating in the program.
- b. The employee must select the most cost effective educational program which will be approved by County Human Resources prior to enrollment.
- c. The agency/department will determine reasonable flextime hours and course loads to meet both the agency/department and employee needs. Employees may be permitted to change their regular work hours if this practice does not negatively impact the agency/department's ability to accomplish work objectives.
- d. Employees participating in a 20/20 Program are required to remain in County service for a minimum of one year, or prorated portion thereof, in exchange for each year of support provided to them while studying for the approved degree, licensing, or certification.

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- e. If an employee leaves County employment for any reason, except as set forth in Section 11g herein, before satisfying the requirements of Section 11d herein, the employee will reimburse the County for that prorated portion of the program expenditures that the employee did not exonerate through continued County employment. The entire amount owed by the employee will be due and payable at the time the employee leaves County service. Any amount not paid at that time will accrue interest at the legal rate until paid in full, and will be subject to collection activity, including court, if necessary.
- f. If the employee does not complete the entire degree, licensing or certificate program for the 20/20 Program, the employee will not be required to reimburse the County for any program expenditures so long as the employee remains in County service for the same length of time as required under Section 11d to satisfy the program obligations.
- g. Participants are not exempt from normal disciplinary action should work performance become unsatisfactory. Participants terminated for cause are required to reimburse program expenses upon termination on a prorated basis.
- h. If a reduction in force or permanent disability which prevents the employee from gainful employment occurs, resulting in the loss of County employment, or if death occurs, the participant is not obligated to reimburse program expenses.
- i. Participants who voluntarily terminate County employment are required to reimburse program expenses using one of the following options: (1) lump sum payment of balance due; or (2) monthly payments of balance due which include interest at the legal rate as determined by the Human Resources Director. The County will pursue collections, including filing a claim in Small Claims Court, if necessary, to recoup amounts owed.
- j. Upon completion of the approved degree, license or certification, the Educational Support Program will provide the participant with resources on County recruitment practices and available positions for which the employee may now qualify.

Section. 12 **EDUCATIONAL LOAN REPAYMENT PROGRAM**: In addition to the methods of educational support provided above, the County may provide assistance to regular employees to repay student loans. Temporary and Per Diem employees are not eligible for this program.

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- a. Hiring Incentive -The County may pay an amount up to the amount of the employee's monthly payment on a student loan as an incentive to join the County workforce, and the monthly nature of the payment would become a retention incentive as well. Any reimbursement amount that is provided for loans made prior to employment are considered taxable by the Internal Revenue Code Section 127.
- b. Retention Incentive – For current County employees with outstanding student loans, this benefit may be available as a retention incentive.
- c. Eligibility – This program would be limited to Nursing, Baccalaureate, Juris Doctorate and Master’s degree graduates employed in a position that has been designated as difficult to recruit or retain. Approval by the hiring agency/department and the Human Resources Department is required.
- d. Maximum Benefit – The benefit is limited to \$5,250 per year.

If any assistance paid to an employee pursuant to this Policy does not meet the requirements set forth under Internal Revenue Code section 127 of the Internal Revenue Code, the County shall treat any such payments as taxable income to the employee. Reimbursement for loans for education received prior to employment will be treated as taxable income to County employees. Repayment of qualifying loans which include repayments of qualifying loans, which will include only those incurred for education received concurrent with County employment, will continue to be reported as non-taxable benefits.

Reference:

Minute Order 3.13 of 11/01/83
Minute Order 3.21 of 03/08/83
Minute Order 3.16 of 09/24/85
Minute Order 3.18 of 04/25/06
Minute Order 3.43 of 08/29/06
Minute Order 3.9 of 03/17/09
Minute Order 3.36 of 12/14/10