

**STATE OF MARYLAND
JUDICIARY**

Policy on Educational Assistance

I. PURPOSE

To establish uniform practices for providing educational assistance for regular employees of the State of Maryland Judiciary.

II. DEFINITIONS

A. Administrative Official

1. The Clerk of Court for the Court in which the employee works;
2. The Administrative Clerk or Administrative Commissioner of the District Court for the district in which the employee works;
3. The director of the respective department or office within the Courts of Appeal, the District Court Headquarters, or the Court-Related Agency in which the employee works; or
4. The State Court Administrator for employees within the Administrative Office of the Courts.

B. Regular Employee – Any person holding a position funded under an approved budget and having an assigned Position Identification Number (PIN), not including contractual and temporary positions, and those held by Judges, Masters, and Law Clerks.

III. SCOPE

This policy applies to all regular employees of the Maryland Judiciary. The Judiciary Human Resources Department is responsible for the overall administration of this policy. The Judiciary Finance Department is responsible for educational reimbursement.

IV. POLICY STATEMENT

The Judiciary is committed to affording all regular employees of the Judiciary the opportunity to participate in a structured program of professional development. Through the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and abilities, employees will be assisted in successfully responding to the challenges confronting the Judiciary. The commitment of the Judiciary to establish opportunities for career enhancements should create a culture of quality that promotes excellence in performance, job enrichment, personal development, greater productivity, and increased morale.

Investment in staffing will contribute significantly to expanding the justice system, improving services, building public trust and confidence, increasing accountability, reducing delays, and supporting public outreach and education.

Recognizing the mutual benefits derived from professional growth, the policy of the Judiciary is to provide educational assistance to eligible employees interested in furthering their formal education. This is training outside the organized training programs, seminars, or workshops that are required of your current or anticipated position. Administrative leave will not be available for outside training. The employee must not allow participation in outside training to interfere with the performance of job duties and responsibilities. An alternate work schedule, if needed, may be arranged with the approval of the employee's Administrative Official. The educational assistance program will provide an eligible employee an allowance per fiscal year for tuition and additional related costs.

The Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals will establish appropriate reimbursement limits that will determine the amount of reimbursement for which each employee may apply. Up to published reimbursement limits, reimbursement may include the cost of tuition, required textbooks, and related fees, such as registration, laboratory, activity, student, and/or facility fees for approved courses at approved educational institutions. Excluded from reimbursement are late fees, interest on delayed payment plans, parking fees, medical service, health or physical fees, or any other fee not deemed reimbursable. Any portion of tuition and/or related fees covered by other sources such as Veteran Education Benefits, scholarships, grants, etc. will not be reimbursable. It is the Judiciary's policy to follow all applicable Internal Revenue Service regulations regarding educational assistance.

Although completion of course work provides an improved educational background, this accomplishment does not obligate the Judiciary to reward such completion with a promotion, transfer, reassignment, salary increase, etc.

V. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Regular, full-time employees and regular, part-time employees (pro-rata basis) who successfully have completed the newly hired, six-month probationary period are eligible to apply for educational assistance.

An employee must maintain job performance at the "meets standards" level or above, before and during participation.

VI. APPLICATION

- A. Eligible employees who are interested in seeking educational assistance must complete an Application for Educational Assistance form. The form is to be submitted to the immediate supervisor for processing at least 15 business days prior to the registration date for the course.
- B. The eligible employee must notify the immediate supervisor of any career goal or plan at this time. If the employee is seeking a specific academic degree or a certificate, a discussion of the program also should occur.

- C. After the supervisor has reviewed the application form and made a recommendation, the form is sent to the Administrative Official for approval or denial. The approved application form is sent to Human Resources. The copy of the approved Application for Educational Assistance form will be sent to the supervisor to forward to the employee.

VII. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A course or degree program to be considered for approval must provide for the professional development of the employee, and bear a relationship to the employee's current or anticipated future duties within the Judiciary. Courses may be taken at accredited community colleges, colleges or universities, technical or business institutions, schools, or Board of Education sites. Offerings at other organizations also may meet approval.

VIII. REIMBURSEMENT PROCEDURES

Within 30 days of notification of successful completion by the educational institution, an eligible employee who successfully has completed an approved course must meet the following conditions for reimbursement.

The employee must submit a completed and approved Tuition Reimbursement Request Form, to include:

- A. The original copy of the grade report from the educational institution that shows the employee has met the grade requirements as indicated below must be submitted.
 - Non-College Course – Pass or Certificate of Successful Program Completion
 - Undergraduate Course - Grade of C or better
 - Graduate or Post Graduate Course - Grade of B or better
- B. The original receipt(s) from the educational institution for tuition, textbooks, and other related fees paid by the employee up to the allowance per eligible employee per fiscal year must be submitted.

The required information described above is sent to Human Resources who will forward the Reimbursement Request Form to the Finance Department for reimbursement for the employee.

The employee must be employed by the Judiciary at the time of course completion to be eligible for reimbursement.

IX. EMPLOYEE'S RESPONSIBILITY

It is the responsibility of the eligible employee to complete an Application for Educational Assistance form and submit it to the immediate supervisor within the appropriate time period for course approval. In addition, the eligible employee must notify the immediate supervisor of any career goal or plan. If the employee is

seeking a specific academic degree or a certificate, a discussion of the program should also occur.

After successful completion of an approved course, the employee must meet the conditions described under Reimbursement Procedures (Section VIII) in order to obtain reimbursement.

The employee must agree to continue employment with the Judiciary for a minimum of twelve months following the completion of the last successfully completed course(s). This requirement is not applicable to Clerks of the Circuit Court. The employee is to immediately refund the Judiciary for reimbursements for a course if the employee fails to meet this requirement due to either a voluntary or involuntary separation of employment.

X. SUPERVISOR'S RESPONSIBILITY

After reviewing the Application for Educational Assistance form, the supervisor will make a recommendation and forward the form to the Administrative Official for approval. In addition, the supervisor must discuss with the employee any career goal or plan. If the employee is seeking a specific academic degree or a certificate, a discussion of the program should also occur.

The supervisor will review the Judicial Branch Expense Account form and ensure that all the conditions have been met. The supervisor will send the form, along with the grade report and receipt(s), to the Administrative Official for approval.

XI. MANAGEMENT'S RESPONSIBILITY

The Administrative Official will provide approval for the course by signing the Application for Educational Assistance form. The completed and approved form is to be sent to Human Resources.

The Administrative Official will approve the Judicial Branch Expense Account form if all of the conditions have been met. The form and attachments will be sent to Human Resources.

XII. HUMAN RESOURCES' RESPONSIBILITY

Human Resources is responsible for the overall administration of this policy. If the employee is eligible and the course has been approved, Human Resources will send a copy of the approved Application for Education Assistance form to the supervisor to forward to the employee.

Upon receipt of the completed Judicial Branch Expense Account form and the attachments, Human Resources will ascertain that the employee met all the conditions required for reimbursement. Human Resources then will forward the form and the attachments to the Finance Department where the reimbursement will be processed.

XIII. MODIFICATION, SUSPENSION, or TERMINATION of POLICY

This policy may be modified, suspended, or terminated at any time due to

budgetary constraints or other sufficient reasons as determined by the Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals or his or her designee.

XIV. INTERPRETIVE AUTHORITY

The Judiciary Human Resources Department, in consultation with other parties as appropriate, is responsible for the interpretation of this policy.