



Tuition Reimbursement Program

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FISCAL YEAR 2012

- Instructions for Tuition Reimbursement
- Pertain to the **Summer 2011, Fall 2011, Winter 2012, and Spring 2012 Semesters.**
- Effective Date **April 1, 2011.**
- **APPLICATIONS FOR SUMMER AND FALL 2011 SEMESTERS MUST BE SUBMITTED BY MAY 2, 2011**
- **APPLICATIONS FOR WINTER AND SPRING 2012 SEMESTERS MUST BE SUBMITTED BY NOVEMBER 1, 2011**

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Table of Contents

Overview of the Tuition Reimbursement Program.....	1
Introduction	1
Priority Funding	1
Eligibility Requirements for the Tuition Reimbursement Program	2
Other Important Facts	2
Professional Development Plan	2
Overview of the Professional Development Plan	2
Career Development Plan	3
Overview of the Career Development Plan	3
Career Development Plan and Tuition Reimbursement Coverage	3
Approved Degree or Certification Goals	3
Documentation Required in the Career Development Plan (CDP)	3
Monitoring of the Approved Career Development Plan	4
Tuition Reimbursement	4
Courses That Qualify for Reimbursement	4
Reimbursement Limits	4
Applying for Tuition Reimbursement Funds	5
Deadlines for Applying for Reimbursement	5
Approvals	6
Disapprovals	6
Filing for Reimbursement	6
Deadlines for Filing for Reimbursement	7

Overview of the Tuition Reimbursement Program

Introduction

Maryland School for the Deaf supports and encourages employees to continue their learning and education throughout their careers at the School. The Tuition Reimbursement Program provides employees the opportunity to obtain the knowledge and skills required of highly demanding jobs at the School. It is also a way to increase the numbers and skill levels of staff necessary for the School to meet essential recruitment and retention needs.

To assist every employee to succeed in the goal of professional development, the Tuition Reimbursement Program provides the employee with financial reimbursement (for college credit or non-credit courses and continuing education programs).

The Tuition Reimbursement Program has three (3) major components:

1. Tuition Reimbursement for Teacher Certification

This component (which requires an approved *Professional Development Plan*) provides tuition reimbursement for courses required to maintain Teacher Certification or obtain additional Teacher Certificates.

2. Tuition Reimbursement for Job-Related College Credit Courses

This component provides tuition reimbursement for those college credit courses that have a direct correlation to job duties.

3. Tuition Reimbursement for Courses Leading to a Specific Academic Degree

This component (which requires an approved *Career Development Plan*) provides tuition reimbursement for courses leading to a degree that will help qualify the employee for a job classification in which MSD has a significant retention and/or recruitment difficulty.

Priority Funding

Due to the increase demand for tuition reimbursement, requests will be separated into two (2) funding segments. The first will be summer and fall semesters and second will be winter and spring semesters. Applications will be approved in the following priority order and then based on submission order until all funds are expended.

1. Classes/praxis for teacher certification – Professional Development Plan is required.
2. Job/career related classes for current job classification – these are classes required for job requirements or suggested by supervisor to improve job performance
3. Administrator's certification – Professional Development Plan is required.
4. Teaching degree undergraduate – Career Development Plan is required.

5. Other types of degrees – Career Development Plan is required.

Eligibility Requirements for the Tuition Reimbursement Program

To be eligible, an employee in any component of the Tuition Reimbursement Program must:

- Be a permanent full-time Faculty or State System employee or part-time Faculty or State System employee who works 50 percent or more
- or
- Be a Contractual Teacher working toward certification requirements. A Professional Development Plan is required.
- **Supervisor approval is required for all employees.**

Other Important Facts

- All course reimbursement must be **pre-approved** (that is, approved prior to the start date of the class). You must adhere to the deadlines in these Guidelines.
- Remember the word *reimbursement* - there is no pre-payment associated with this program. You must provide proof of payment AND successful course completion before reimbursement is issued. Employees who have received student loans must provide proof of loan payment for reimbursement.
- All participating colleges and universities must be accredited. Courses may be traditional on-site, satellite, distance, correspondence and/or web-based.
- Reimbursement will not be approved for any program sponsored, in full or in part, by the Maryland School for the Deaf or any other Maryland State agency or department.
- Reimbursement is not a supplement to other financial assistance for which employees may be eligible. Employees receiving tuition support or financial assistance from any alternate source must report it and the amount on the application form. This amount will be deducted before computing the allowable reimbursement. Employees who fail to report alternate sources and amounts of financial aid on the application will be liable for return of the reimbursement award, and face possible exclusion from future reimbursement program eligibility.

Professional Development Plan

Overview of the Professional Development Plan

A Professional Development Plan (PDP) is an understanding between the Appointing Authority and the Faculty to maintain or obtain new Teaching Certification requirements. A current Professional Development Plan must be on file in the appropriate Campus Principal's office.

Employees requesting reimbursement for classes required for teacher certification will need to have their application initialed by the certification coordinator on your respective campus. Those initials certify that this meets your certification requirements and requires priority funding.

Career Development Plan

Overview of the Career Development Plan

A **Career Development Plan (CDP)** is an understanding between the Appointing Authority and the employee regarding a degree or certification goal the employee needs to achieve so that the employee can meet a specific career goal. The approved degree or certification goals will help prepare the employee for those classifications with significant recruitment and retention difficulties, as determined by the Orioles Management Team (OMT).

An approved CDP is required if a MSD employee is seeking a specific academic degree or certification in order to enter or advance in one of the fields listed below. However, a CDP is not required if the employee is applying for tuition reimbursement for courses that are directly related to current or anticipated job duties and responsibilities, and is not seeking a specific academic degree or certification.

Career Development Plan and Tuition Reimbursement Coverage

With an approved CDP, all core curriculum and required courses will be approved for reimbursement. Once you have an approved CDP, you still must follow all of the rules for tuition reimbursement, including the forms to be submitted, deadlines for application and payment, and also credit and reimbursement.

Approved Degree or Certification Goals

Look at the chart below. In the left column, listed are all the classifications currently approved as career goals for Career Development Plans. In the right column, listed are the corresponding degree or certification goals that are supported through tuition reimbursement. With the new requirements of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), update certification requirements will take precedence.

The classification you wish to enter or advance in is ...	MSD will approve the degree or certification goal(s) of...
Teacher Aide	Associates Degree
Teacher	Masters Degree

Documentation Required in the Career Development Plan (CDP)

The CDP application (available via the Training Coordinator or Campus Principal's Office) must include:

- ✓ A completed *Career Development Plan form*, which details:
 - ❑ Employee identifying information
 - ❑ Employee's desired career goal - that is, a specific classification from the list above (e.g., Teacher)
 - ❑ Employee's chosen degree or certification goal that will help qualify the employee for the desired career goal (Using the above example, an appropriate degree goal for Teacher would be a Master Degree)
 - ❑ The accredited community college, college, or university where the employee will be pursuing the degree or certification goal
 - ❑ The employee's signature and the signature of the appointing authority

- ✓ The *sequence or listing of courses* needed to complete degree requirements. List classes by course number and title (such as Math 101: Introduction to Algebra). The listing of the course requirements can be copied from the college/university catalog or developed with an academic advisor.

Monitoring of the Approved Career Development Plan

The Training Coordinator will monitor and evaluate the employee's academic progress and status each semester. The Training Coordinator, in consultation with the respective Appointing Authority, may discontinue a CDP if, after a fair review, the employee is not making satisfactory academic progress (based on GPA and/or the number of credits completed) or the employee's job performance has significantly deteriorated.

The employee must immediately report in writing to the Training Coordinator any significant changes in the employee's work or educational status. Examples of such changes include decrease in work hours, resignation, termination, extended sick leave, or demotion. Such employment status changes will usually result in immediate discontinuation of your CDP.

Tuition Reimbursement

Courses That Qualify for Reimbursement

We will also reimburse you for the cost of Praxis I and II or other challenge examinations. But remember, the challenge examination must be given for a course that is either directly related to your current or anticipated duties or part of your approved Career Development Plan. Your application for approval and reimbursement for the exam is made just like all other applications for tuition reimbursement. MSD will reimburse you for the cost of the challenge exam only after we receive written notice that you have passed or you present MSD with passing scores.

American Sign Language classes taken through a recognized program will be reimbursed.

Reimbursement Limits

Each employee is eligible to be reimbursed for a **maximum of 24 credit hours** during the total period covered by these Guidelines. In addition, no more than nine (9) credit hours may be approved in any one academic semester.

The maximum reimbursement rate is **\$273 at the undergraduate level** and **\$471 at the graduate level** per credit hour, and for **tuition costs only**. No books, fees, or other expenses will be reimbursed in this program. The reimbursement rate is set by the Department of Budget and Management. If and when the Department of Budget and Management changes its rates, the Tuition Reimbursement Program will do so as well, pending MSD budget authorization. For employees receiving tuition assistance from other sources (such as Veterans Education Benefits, scholarships, grants, etc.), tuition reimbursement under this program will only be provided for any remaining unsubsidized tuition expenses to the limits established in these guidelines.

Applying for Tuition Reimbursement Funds

Applications determined to be incomplete after the submission deadline will be reviewed only after all complete applications in all categories have been reviewed and if funds are still available.

The application package **must** include:

- ✓ An Application for Tuition Reimbursement Funds (MSD 4010) completed in full.
- ✓ A photocopy of the official *catalogue course description(s)* (via the internet or by traditional course catalog).
- ✓ A copy of the individual PDP for MSDE, if applicable.

Deadlines for Applying for Reimbursement

<i>If applying for tuition reimbursement for courses conducted in:</i>	<i>Completed and signed Application is due by:</i>
Summer and Fall 2011 Semester	May 2, 2011
Winter and Spring 2012 Semester	November 1, 2011

Applications will be accepted up to that time and will be time and date stamped upon receipt. Applications will be approved in the established priority order and then based on submission order until all funds are expended.

Note: Some colleges and universities do not follow traditional academic semesters as listed above, especially for web-based courses. If the courses are not conducted during the traditional academic semesters identified above, then the Application for Tuition Reimbursement Funds and all required documentation must be received by the Training Coordinator at least 10 working days (2 weeks) prior to the start date of the course(s). Approval of these non-traditional applications will be based on compliance with all other aspects of these guidelines and fund availability.

If for any reason an employee registers for different course(s) than the ones approved on the Application for Tuition Reimbursement Funds, and the employee wants tuition reimbursement for the new course(s), the employee must complete the Tuition Reimbursement Course Change/Cancel Form (MSD 4011) and submit to the Training Coordinator. This should be done no later than one week after the start of the new course(s). If the new course(s) is directly related to the employee's current or anticipated duties and responsibilities or part of an approved Career Development Plan or Professional Development Plan, and the credit total does not exceed the credit total originally approved for the semester, it will generally be approved for reimbursement. Reimbursement will occur only for those courses approved in advance. Also, if the employee drops or withdraws from a course(s) identified on an approved Application for Tuition Reimbursement Funds, the employee must advise the Training Coordinator in writing immediately.

Approvals

If the Application for Tuition Reimbursement Funds is approved, a letter of approval along with a copy of your Application for Tuition Reimbursement Funds listing the classes and amount approved will be sent to you. Please check to determine whether you have been approved for Tuition Reimbursement and if the amount approved is correct. The approval letter will include procedures for filing for reimbursement once courses are completed successfully.

Disapprovals

There are times that Applications for Tuition Reimbursement Funds are not approved. The most frequent reasons for disapproval are:

- Request submitted past deadline
- Class has no relation to employee's job duties
- Paperwork lacks proper signatures
- No Career Development Plan on file
- No Professional Development Plan on file
- No money left in program

Filing for Reimbursement

After you have completed your courses (those approved for reimbursement) and received your grades, please forward the following items within 45 calendar days of the last day of class as listed on the approved MSD 4010:

1. A **Completed Tuition Reimbursement Request Form** (MSD 4050) in full (Note: your home address is required for payment.);
2. A **copy of the approved Application for Tuition Reimbursement Funds** (MSD 4010);
3. Your **grade report or transcript** (either printed from the Internet or original documents) must show that you received a final passing grade for the course(s) we approved for reimbursement. (Note: Teacher-prepared grades, notes, or exam results are not acceptable.) A passing grade is a "C" or better for undergraduate courses, and a "B" or

better for graduate courses. State regulations require proof of a final passing grade in order for reimbursement to occur; and

4. **Original proof of payment**, which includes an original receipt marked "paid" from the college or university, a canceled check, a credit card receipt, or statement from college denoting payment and respective method of payment. Only the amount you show as paid will be reimbursed to you up to the approved amount.

Please assemble request with the Tuition Reimbursement Request Form on top, followed by the copy of the approved Application for Tuition Reimbursement Funds, then your grades, and lastly, the proof of payment. *Two (2) additional packages, exactly like the first only containing copies, must accompany it.* Submit these packages to the Training Coordinator. You must be a MSD employee on the date that you submit your paperwork for reimbursement.

Once you have submitted your paperwork for actual reimbursement, a check will be sent to your home usually within 4-6 weeks or the money will be deposited into your account if you have direct deposit for your paycheck.

Deadlines for Filing for Reimbursement

All required invoice documents must be forwarded to the Training Coordinator within 45 calendar days of the last day of class as listed on the approved Application for Tuition Reimbursement Funds Form (MSD 4010). If you do not file by the deadline, MSD will cancel your request for reimbursement and no payment will be provided.

If you cannot adhere to this deadline due to unforeseen circumstances, please send documentation requesting an extension of the deadline. You must explain the specific reason(s) for the extension request and the specific date when you intend to file your paperwork for reimbursement. You must make this request through the Training Coordinator.

Promotional Opportunity

There is no guarantee for a promotion once you have completed your courses and have obtained your degree. The educational experience you have acquired will provide you the opportunity to apply for a new position School-wide and allow you to strive for a new and exciting career.