

# DC HEALTH

District of Columbia Department of Health

## Tuition Assistance Program (TAP)

### PROCEDURE 530.000

(Formerly Policy no. 1000)

Implementing Office: Office of the Director/Office of Human Resources

Training Required: Yes

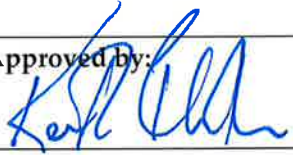
Originally Issued: June, 2012

Revised/Reviewed:

**SEP 20 2021**

**(Second Revision)**

Approved by:



LaQuandra S. Nesbitt MD, MPH;  
Agency Director

Review by Legal Counsel:



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General Counsel

Effective Date:

**SEP 20 2021**

Valid Through Date:

**SEP 20 2024**

<p><b>I. Authority</b></p>	<p>The District of Columbia Comprehensive Merit Personnel Act of 1978 (CMPA) § 1301, effective March 3, 1979 (DC Law 2-139; DC Official Code § 1-613.01 (2001))</p>
<p><b>II. Reason for the Policy</b></p>	<p>As a part of its desire to meet its employees' evolving needs and to recruit and maintain top-level talent, the Department of Health (DC Health) has established the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) to reimburse employees' for tuition costs incurred advancing their education. The purpose of TAP is to encourage and support the efforts of DC Health employees to obtain skills, knowledge, and abilities that increase the effectiveness of work performance in their present positions and prepare employees for possible career advancement within DC Health.</p>
<p><b>III. Applicability</b></p>	<p>All full-time employees, who have completed a probationary period, of the Department are eligible to participate. Employees who are on leave without pay, Paid Family Leave, DC Family Leave, DC Medical Leave, or benefits under the federal Family and Medical Leave Act (See SOP 540.000 Family and Medical Leave Benefits) may apply to TAP upon their return to full-time duty.</p> <p>Employees who are completing a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) may apply to TAP upon successful completion of the PIP.</p>

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	<p>At the discretion of the DC Health Director, District employees assigned to DC Health on a long-term basis e.g. assigned employees from the Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO) or Office of Contracts and Procurement (OCP) may be considered for TAP funds. Once approved, these employees will abide by the terms of this SOP.</p>
<p><b>IV. Policy Statement</b></p>	<p>The DC Health Office of Human Resources (DC Health HR) is the office accountable for managing TAP. DC Health HR is responsible for accepting and processing TAP applications, and managing documentation of courses taken, the dates of those courses, their cost, and their completion. The Human Resources Officer (HRO) is the accountable manager over DC Health HR. The HRO will designate an employee to serve as the TAP Coordinator. The TAP Coordinator is responsible for the daily operations of the program. The TAP Coordinator will maintain a record of pending and paid tuition reimbursements.</p> <p>Employees apply to TAP electronically using the Tuition Assistance Program Application. The submission must be received by the TAP Coordinator a minimum of ten (10) business days in advance of the start date of the class to be funded under TAP. Applications must be approved, signed and dated by the employee's immediate supervisor, and the Director, or his/her designee. The TAP Coordinator will coordinate with staff from OCFO to verify that the funds are available to honor the request.</p> <p>All full-time DC Health employees, who have completed a probationary period, are eligible to apply to TAP to offset the cost of enrolling in classes at an eligible institution. Conferences, meetings, or professional association events are not eligible for funding under TAP. Such events are to be addressed under the District of Columbia Travel Policy. The program that includes the course must be directly related to the employee's current DC Health work or enhance the employee's qualifications for another DC Health position. The supervisor's approval of the request shall be interpreted as this requirement being met. To be funded under TAP, a course must meet the following additional conditions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The course must progress the employee towards a certification, associate degree, bachelor's degree, graduate</li> </ol>

degree, or the initial attainment of a new, or more advanced, professional license.

2. The course must be taken for a pass/fail or letter grade. An employee may not use TAP funds to audit a course.
3. The course must award credit for academic work performed during the enrollment. Courses which award credit only for job or life experience are ineligible.
4. Courses that award credit for completion must be offered by an accredited college or university.

The maximum TAP funding per employee will be declared at the beginning of the fiscal year by the Chief Operating Officer given the constraints of that year's agency budget. Funds cannot be split between fiscal years and are distributed based upon the fiscal year in which the course begins. If the COO does not issue a declaration at the beginning of the fiscal year, the previous year's cap will remain in effect. The COO has the discretion to direct that DC Health HR no longer accept applications if the allotted funds for the year are expended.

Use of TAP funds is limited to tuition costs only. TAP funds may not be used for the cost of application fees, books, travel, food, lodging, parking, late fees, or any other miscellaneous charges relating to the course.

The course must be successfully completed for the employee to receive reimbursement. If the grade report (see Procedure B) does not indicate successful completion, the employee will not receive reimbursement. In the event a class is cancelled or rescheduled, an alternate class may be selected. However, the employee must repeat the approval process within two weeks after the course start date. Failure to notify the TAP Coordinator of a course change may result in non-payment of tuition reimbursement.

Employees must submit a grade report to the TAP Coordinator within 30 days of course completion to verify the grade received. If the grade does not meet the standard for successful completion (see definition below), reimbursement will not be paid. If the employee does not provide the grade report within 30 days of course completion, the course may no longer be eligible for reimbursement. A grade of "Incomplete" is not eligible for reimbursement.

Classes must be attended outside of the employee's tour of duty. No overtime shall be awarded, and no compensatory time shall accrue, for time devoted to the course.

An employee who receives tuition assistance must agree to remain employed by DC Health for a period of at least 24 months following completion of the course for which tuition assistance funds are received.

Any employee who receives tuition assistance and voluntarily leaves DC Health employment within 12 months of course completion, or is separated for cause within that time, shall repay to DC Health all tuition funds they received during the 12 months prior to the date of separation from DC Health. The amount of repaid tuition assistance funds may be reduced or waived by the Director.

Any employee who receives tuition assistance and leaves DC Health between 12 and 24 months of course completion, or is separated for cause during that time, shall repay to DC Health the pro-rated amount due, depending upon the number of months remaining before the 24-month commitment would have been met. Tuition assistance funds owed by an employee may be reduced or waived by the Director. Tuition assistance funds owed shall be waived by the Director in the event the employee is separated from employment due to a reduction-in-force.

Outstanding tuition assistance funds do not require repayment if the employee dies, or is terminated due to the inability to work caused by a long-term disability or serious medical condition that substantially limits performing the essential functions of their job of record.

For audit purposes, the TAP Coordinator will retain documentation in the TAP file to support all waivers of repayment.

A participating employee who is separated by a Reduction in Force (RIF) order and who is restored to active service through the Priority Placement or a Competitive Placement process may continue using TAP upon return to full duty.

	<p>The falsification of any document to receive tuition assistance is grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including termination.</p> <p>Any employee in non-compliance with any part of this SOP may be subject to commensurate disciplinary action.</p>
<p><b>IV. Definitions &amp; Acronyms</b></p>	<p><b>Eligible Institution-</b> A public, or private, post-secondary educational institution or body that is accredited by a recognized accreditation board such as the Council on Higher Education Accreditation.</p> <p><b>Full-Time Employee-</b> An employee who has 1.0 FTE (full-time equivalent) work commitment, who has completed a probationary period.</p> <p><b>HRO-</b> Human Resources Officer</p> <p><b>OCFO-</b> District of Columbia Office of the Chief Financial Officer</p> <p><b>OCP-</b> Office of Contracts and Procurement</p> <p><b>PIP-</b> Performance Improvement Plan</p> <p><b>Successful Completion-</b> The attainment of a grade equivalent of “C” or better for an undergraduate or certificate course, a grade of “B” or better for a graduate level course, or the attainment of a passing grade for courses graded on a pass/fail basis.</p>
<p><b>VI. Procedures</b></p>	<p><b>Procedure A: Application for Tuition Assistance</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The employee identifies a course at an eligible institution.</li> <li>2. The employee formally requests tuition assistance electronically using the Tuition Assistance Application Form. The employee must include a current home address (see Procedure B, Step 6).</li> <li>3. The employee will submit the request form, the course description, and a tuition cost verification to his/her supervisor for approval.</li> </ol>

4. The supervisor will approve or deny the request, and route an approved request to the TAP Coordinator.
5. The TAP Coordinator will review the package for completeness and compliance with policy, and certify the availability of funds with the Agency Fiscal Officer or his/her designee.
6. The TAP coordinator will file the original documents, and return a copy to the requesting employee with accompanying written notification he/she is authorized to receive reimbursement for the course.
7. If the original course is cancelled by the university or college, the applicant may submit a new Tuition Assistance Request within two weeks of the cancellation with the substituted class noted on the form. A new application must be submitted within the two week period. Late submissions will not be accepted.

#### **Procedure B: Payment of Assistance**

1. The employee registers for the course and pays with his/her personal funds.
2. The employee shall attend the course through completion and receive a final grade.
3. Within 30 days of course completion, the employee shall submit the grade report for the completed course and a business office receipt showing the paid tuition bill to the TAP Coordinator. Receipts must include the employee's name and must provide detailed proof of payment (e.g. itemized receipt, tuition discounts, credit card statement, or contract). Employees may be required to supply a written explanation for the file if the business office receipt is unclear. Requests for repayment that are submitted beyond the 30-day window may not be reimbursed.

	4. The Human Resources Officer, or designee, shall verify the documentation and route to the Agency Fiscal Officer for issuance of reimbursement.
<b>VII. Contacts</b>	Tuition Assistance Program Coordinator  Human Resources Officer
<b>VIII. Related Documents, Forms and Tools</b>	Tuition Assistance Program Application