

Department of Vocational Rehabilitation

Professional Development Policy



Cabinet for Workforce Development

Revised October 2001

INTRODUCTION

The mission of the Kentucky Department of Vocational Rehabilitation is to assist Kentuckians with disabilities to achieve suitable employment and independence. The provision of ongoing support and encouragement of professional development activities is essential for ensuring that qualified staff is available to provide services to consumers. The Department values all staff, their individual talents, unique abilities, and contributions to the Department's mission. The professional development policy reflects Department values and encourages professional growth.

The Department of Vocational Rehabilitation will set aside sufficient funds to pay for educational assistance contingent on funding availability.

Selection for participation in training shall be on an equal opportunity basis. No employee shall be prohibited from participating in training courses because of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability, age, or veteran status.

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

All professional growth and development activities offered to staff enhance work related skills, knowledge, improve service delivery, meet the requirements of the comprehensive system of personnel development and are in keeping with the Department's mission and values

ALL professional growth and development activities must be included in the employee's current personal career development plan and preapproved by the employee's supervisor.

Service delivery to Department consumers is paramount. Therefore, every class, including GSC and GOT as well as each class under a program such as the CPM, **must** be individually approved by the employee's supervisor to insure that the Department's mission is met.

The employee's supervisor and the division director must preapprove extensive professional development programs including the Masters Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling, Certified Public Manager, and Professional Rehabilitation Assistants Program. Enrollment in individual courses under the auspices of these programs may continue to be approved only if the individual meets all other general requirements.

College credit courses must be approved using the Kentucky Department of Personnel P-33 Form, Education Assistance Authorization.

Courses, other than for college credit, must be approved using the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation Pre-Approval Form.

If at all possible the employee's classes should be after working hours so the 37.5 hour workweek can remain intact. When essential, however, time off from regular work hours may be approved by the employee's supervisor.

Compensatory time **will not** be approved for training other than required inservice training.

Training, including courses for college credit, may be approved while an employee is in probationary status.

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Employees who live or work in Franklin County or an adjoining county will receive educational tuition assistance only for courses taken through Kentucky State University (KSU) unless KSU does not offer the course, degree or certification program. This policy shall apply uniformly unless the Executive Director of the Governmental Services Center (GSC) has waived the requirement.

EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE

When incorporated in an employee's personal career development plan, educational assistance may be provided for:

- ❖ Professional Rehabilitation Assistants Programs
- ❖ Public or private colleges and universities
- ❖ WEB based training
- ❖ Vocational and secondary schools
- ❖ Governor's Office of Technology (GOT)
- ❖ Educational television
- ❖ Governmental Services Center (GSC)
- ❖ Other accredited professional development vendors
- ❖ Other approvable training

An employee may initiate the request for educational assistance, or the Department may suggest to the employee that specific courses might help him or her perform job duties more proficiently.

COLLEGE TRAINING

Tuition can only be paid at the highest rate currently paid to a state-supported college or university.

The following will not be paid:

- ❖ Routine registration fees;
- ❖ Laboratory fees;
- ❖ Basic and normal costs charged by the institution for actual instruction;
- ❖ Examination fees required by the institution;
- ❖ Required textbooks and other required course supplies;
- ❖ Late registration fees;
- ❖ Withdrawal fees;
- ❖ Parking or transportation;
- ❖ Records and transcripts;
- ❖ Specific course taken previously by the employee for which he or she received a passing grade, without prior approval for tuition assistance.

Department paid tuition for graduate or undergraduate coursework shall not exceed the following hours:

- ❖ Six hours per regular semester
- ❖ Six hours per summer semester
- ❖ Six hours per intersession

An exception will be made to approve nine semester hours for individuals taking the internship required for a Master's Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling.

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If the Department has provided tuition assistance for an employee to achieve a master's degree, additional college coursework will only be approved or denied on a case by case basis by the Department's Human Resource Development Administrator.

Employees carrying a grade of "I" or incomplete from a previous course for which educational assistance was received are not eligible for further educational assistance until the course is completed, unless the Department determines that the incomplete resulted from circumstances beyond the employee's control.

Payment of tuition will be made directly to the educational institution from the Department.

The Department shall maintain the files and records to ensure the proper administration of the tuition assistance program. The files shall include copies of all completed forms and records of satisfactory completion of all training and shall be located in the Human Resource Development Branch.

OBLIGATION OF THE EMPLOYEE

An employee who has voluntarily requested approval for educational assistance is obligated to sign an agreement recognizing the following obligations:

- ❖ Complete the course for which approval was given;
- ❖ Provide the Department with proof of a satisfactory grade within the deadline established;
- ❖ Complete item 12 of the P-33 form, the student evaluation of instruction portion, following completion of the course.
- ❖ Continue to work for the Department from which he or she received educational assistance at least ninety (90) days after completion of the course.

The employee's signature on the P-33 indicates authorization for the Department to withhold completely all educational assistance monies, or recover all or part of any assistance granted if:

1. The employee fails to provide the Department, within thirty (30) working days of scheduled completion of the course, a student evaluation for each course taken, and an official grade report with a satisfactory grade in the course for which the educational assistance was authorized. Satisfactory grade means a "C" in undergraduate studies or a professional degree program and a "B" in graduate studies. A grade of "I" or incomplete is not a satisfactory grade and will not be carried beyond thirty (30) working days of the scheduled completion of the course.
2. The employee is voluntarily terminated or dismissed after a course is completed or during a course and before the employee's three month employment requirement is met. This requirement shall not apply to employees who do not meet the service requirements because of layoffs, reductions in work force, or actions resulting from internal mobility programs.
3. The employee drops the course.

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4. The employee receives duplicate payment for the same course from any other source, i.e., scholarships, veteran's educational payments, etc.

Employees who have been directed by the Department to take a course under the educational assistance program cannot be required to sign an authorization for recovery of funds.

PROCEDURES FOR APPLYING FOR AND GRANTING APPROVAL OF EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE FOR COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY TRAINING

- ❖ The employee obtains an Education Assistance Authorization Form (P-33) from the Human Resource Development (HRD) Branch.
- ❖ The employee completes the application portion of form P-33 and submits the form to his or her supervisor.
- ❖ The supervisor completes the appropriate portion of form P-33 and submits the form to the HRD Branch.
- ❖ When approval has been made and educational assistance is authorized, form P-33 is returned to the employee.
- ❖ At the time of registration, the employee presents the completed, approved form P-33 to the appropriate person at the educational institution. The expenses authorized on form P-33 will be billed directly to the Department.

OBLIGATION OF THE SUPERVISOR

The employee's supervisor's signature on the employee's P-33 or Department of Vocational Rehabilitation Preapproval Form validates that the employee's obligations have been met and that the employee's supervisor supports and is in full agreement with the employee's participation in said training.

Further, the employee's supervisor must assure the following **prior** to approving any training other than Department required inservice training:

- ❖ Training should have a clear and direct relationship to the work of the Department and to the improvement of the employee's work effectiveness in his or her present position or a position in the Department to which he or she can reasonably aspire.
- ❖ The employee must be satisfactorily completing his or her job duties. However, training may be required of an employee to address a specific deficiency.
- ❖ The employee must have a current personal career development plan with specific personal career development goals, that have been reviewed and approved by the employee's supervisor.
- ❖ The employee's supervisor must sign the P-33 or the Department's Preapproval Form.
- ❖ The employee's supervisor must assure that the employee understands the Department's professional development policy.

EXCEPTIONS

Other exceptions to this policy, when in the best interest of the public may be granted when justified in writing and approved by the Commissioner.