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21.10 Tuition Assistance

The County will increase the maximum annual allowance payable under the Employee Tuition Assistance Program **shall be \$1730**, to \$1530 for FY 2008, to \$1630 for FY 2009, and \$1730 for FY 2010. The employee must remain employed for at least 2 years after completion of any course funded in whole or part by the County, or pay back the County a pro-rated portion of the funds received.

- (a) The Employer may approve tuition assistance for unit member development related to the unit member's current job functions or career ladder in the same job series or profession.
- (b) The Employer may approve tuition assistance for unit member who is working toward a degree in a field of study that will prepare him/her to make a career change to another position within the Montgomery County Government.**
- (c) Employee must receive approval from the Department Director prior to submitting tuition assistance request to the Office of Human Resources for review.
- (d) Employer may approve tuition assistance towards education and training to obtain a professionally recognized certificate, or an accredited post secondary education degree.
- (e) Colleges and Universities attended with tuition assistance funds must be accredited by a recognized accrediting agency.
- (f) All other short term training programs must relate to the employee's current job or career ladder in the same job series or job profession.
- (g) The Employer may approve tuition assistance for tuition payments only. The Employer will not approve tuition assistance for **examination fees and compulsory fees** such as matriculation, registration, laboratory, and library fees.
- (h) The Employer will not approve credit by examination courses (Courses in which credit is obtained solely by taking an examination).**
- (i) The Employer will not approve tuition assistance for books, supplies, and application fees, or extra fees such as late registration **or library book returns, parking, travel, food, lodging, and other costs incidental to the credit courses.**

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- (j) ~~The Employer will not approve if tuition assistance benefit would duplicate benefits received for the same educational activity under other programs such as scholarships, veterans' benefits, etc...~~ **The Employer will continue the practice of not approving a tuition assistance benefit that would duplicate benefits received for the same educational activity (i.e. course) under other programs such as scholarships, veteran's benefits, grants, etc.** The Employer will continue the practice of not approving a tuition assistance benefit when the employee is receiving tuition payment/reimbursement for the same educational activity under other programs such as scholarships, veteran's benefits, grants, ect...
- (k) All classes approved for tuition assistance must be held in the United States.
- (l) The Employer will not reimburse for courses which are primarily recreational, or utilize a specific faith-based method as a primary approach to problem solving or treatment.
- (m) Tuition assistance is available on a first-come first-served basis until all authorized funding has been obligated.
- (n) Employees receiving tuition assistance must attend the activities for which they are receiving tuition assistance during their off duty hours.
- (o) An employee who received tuition assistance must complete the training with a passing grade, or the employee must reimburse the County for the amount of the County's tuition assistance. **Final Grades or certificate of completion must be provided to OHR upon completion of the course.**
- (p) **The tuition assistance does not have to be repaid if the employee dies or retires on a County disability retirement. The Employer may waive repayment of tuition assistance in other extenuating circumstances.**
- (q) An employee who is not approved for tuition assistance may file a grievance only if the denial by the Employer was arbitrary and capricious. Actions taken by the Employer to be in compliance with Section (m) above may not be grieved.
- (r) **Tuition assistance shall be suspended for FY 2013. The tuition assistance program shall be reinstated beginning in FY 2014. The amount and proportion of tuition assistance funding shall be a subject of the 2nd year reopener of this contract, effective July 1, 2013.**