Montgomery County

Tuition Assistance Program
UNREP (Only)

Important Information

This booklet provides general guidance for UNREP employees concerning the County's employee tuition assistance benefit. It is not intended to change or otherwise modify any law, rule, regulation or bargaining agreement that may impact the subject matter contained in this document. If there is an inconsistency, the law, rule, regulation or bargaining agreement will prevail.

General Information and Eligibility

Q. **What is tuition assistance?**

A. Tuition assistance is funding that the County provides to help an employee pay for education or training that the employee chooses to take. Its purpose is to help you improve your job performance and career potential.

Q. **Who is eligible for tuition assistance?**

A. All full-time and part-time year-round merit UNREP employees of the County are eligible for tuition assistance.

Q. **I'm a new employee. Am I eligible for tuition assistance?**

A. Yes, as a probationary employee (i.e., a permanent full-time or part-time employee who does not yet have merit system status with the County) you may apply for tuition assistance. Initially, you'll have to pay the tuition and compulsory fees. After your tuition assistance request is approved, the County will reimburse you for those direct training costs when you successfully complete the course and have been granted merit system status.

Q. **What does tuition assistance cover?**

A. Tuition assistance covers education or training to obtain a:
- ❑ certificate;
- ❑ associate degree;
- ❑ baccalaureate degree; or
- ❑ graduate degree.

Tuition assistance may also be used for credit courses, non-credit courses, or seminars.

Tuition assistance covers **only** the cost of **tuition**.

Tuition assistance **does not** cover direct or compulsory costs of the training such as:
- ❑ matriculation;
- ❑ registration;
- ❑ laboratory fees; and
- ❑ library services.

Q. **To qualify for tuition assistance, does the training or education have to be related to my job?**

A. The training must be directly related to either:
- ❑ the employee's current County Work or normal career progression; or

- ❑ a field of study that will prepare the employee to make a career change with the County

Q. **What does tuition assistance not cover?**

A. Tuition assistance does **not** cover:
- credit courses taken on an audit (i.e., no grade) basis; or
- credit by examination courses
- books, supplies, and application or extra fees incidental to the course.
- exam fees
- extra fees such as late registration and parking fee

Also, tuition assistance may not be used to duplicate benefits received for the same training or education under other programs.

Q. **Where can I take training that is covered by tuition assistance?**

A. When using tuition assistance for college courses, the courses must be taken at an accredited college or university as recognized by the United States of Department of Education or the Higher Education Accreditation Commission

When using tuition assistance for not-degree courses or seminars, the courses must be taken at institutions that are recognized by the United States of Department of Education or Higher Education Accreditation Commission

Q. **How much tuition assistance is available to County employees?**

A. Total funding for tuition assistance is set on a fiscal year basis (July 1 – June 30). The maximum amount that a full-time (FT)

employee or part-time (PT) employee may receive *during FY24* is listed below.

Bargaining Unit	Full-time Employee	Part-time Employee
UNREP	$2,300.00	$1,150.00

Note: tuition assistance is available on a first-come, first-served basis. Once all the funds for the fiscal year are used, tuition assistance is not available until the next fiscal year.

Q. **How is the amount of annual tuition assistance determined?**

A. For represented employees, funding for tuition assistance is determined through the County's collective bargaining with the designated employee representatives.

Q. **When can I take courses covered by tuition assistance?**

A. Courses covered by tuition assistance **must be** taken *during off-duty hours*. However, you may take a course during your normal work hours if you get prior authorization from your supervisor. You'll need to attach to the tuition assistance application either an approved leave request signed by your supervisor *or* an approved work schedule with a flex-time adjustment applicable during your training period. The course or training start date must be on the current fiscal year.

Q. **Is tuition assistance a taxable benefit?**

A. At the present time, tuition assistance is not considered taxable income. However, it has been taxable in the past and could become taxable again if federal law changes. If tuition assistance becomes taxable, the training staff will notify tuition assistance participants.

How and When to Apply

Q. **How do I apply for tuition assistance?**

A. To apply, you must:
- ❑ use on-line application
- ❑ To do this:

- Click here

- Login using your County USERID and Password

- Click on "Apply for Tuition Assistance Program" proceed button

If you need help or have any questions, please e-mail the training team at ohr.tap@montgomerycountymd.gov

Q. **When may I apply for tuition assistance?**

A. The training staff accepts tuition assistance applications only for the current registration period. Be sure to submit your application *at least three weeks* prior to your actual registration. Application must be submitted within the fiscal year to be considered.

Q. **How long does it take to process an application?**

A. The training staff will make every effort to process your application within seven to 14 days of receiving it.

Q. **How will I know that my tuition assistance has been approved?**

A. Once your application has been approved, you will receive an *authorization letter* from OHR addressed to the school. Take the letter to the school when you register. The letter is a contract that authorizes the school to bill the County directly for tuition fees.

Q. **What should I do if I've already paid for the course?**

A. You may request to be reimbursed. To request reimbursement, submit a copy of the receipt indicating payment of the tuition to the training team at ohr.tap@montgomerycountymd.gov

Your Obligations

Q. **What are my responsibilities under the tuition assistance program?**

A. You must remain employed by the County for one year after completing any course funded in whole or in part by the County, *or* you must reimburse the County a prorated amount of the tuition assistance received. If you're leaving County service or retiring, contact the training staff to arrange for repayment of the funds. Otherwise, the amount owed will be deducted from your unused annual or compensatory leave balance or refund of retirement contributions.

All course work must be completed with a passing grade or documented by a course completion certificate. It is **your** responsibility to submit the original grade notice or copy of course completion certificate to the OHR training staff. **Final grade or certificate of completion must be provided to the Office of Human Resources upon completion of the course.** Future tuition assistance requests from you will not be processed until grade notices or certificates for prior courses have been received by the training staff.

Q. **What if I don't complete the course or if I fail the course?**

A. If you don't successfully complete an approved course, you're obligated to reimburse the County for any funds spent for the course. Future tuition assistance requests will be denied if you do not repay those funds to the County.

Q. **What if I am approved for tuition assistance and don't attend the training?**

A. If your tuition assistance has been approved by OHR and you decide not to register for the course, it is **your** responsibility to notify the training staff immediately so that the funds can be made available to another student.

Your notification of tuition assistance approval will ask whether you registered for the approved course and will ask you to respond to the training staff by a specific date. After that date, if you have not used the approved tuition assistance, the training staff will let you know that your funds will be canceled for that semester.

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If you need additional information about the County's tuition assistance program, please call the training staff at 240-777-5116 or e-mail us at
ohr.tap@montgomerycountymd.gov

NOTE: This information can be made available in an alternate format. Please contact the training staff at (240) 777-5116.