

Policy:

The Educational Assistance program viability will be determined each year by the Board of County Commissioners. Lee County may provide educational assistance to its employees to allow them to enhance their ability to serve the public interest of the citizens of Lee County.

Comments/Procedures**211:1 GENERAL PROVISIONS**

1. Coursework must be designed to *enhance* the knowledge, skills, and abilities relating to the official duties that the employees perform, and must be taken for credit at an accredited college or university.
2. No reimbursement will be made for coursework or training required as a minimum qualification for employment.
3. All regular full-time employees are eligible for educational assistance once they have completed any required probationary periods.
4. Employees must seek approval prior to enrollment if requesting reimbursement. The Department and Human Resources **must** receive requests for educational assistance *no later than two weeks after the first day the course begins*. The Department, Office of the County Manager, and Human Resources will consider the following factors in evaluating requests for educational assistance:
 - a) The nature, content, and purpose of the course of study;
 - b) The benefits to be derived by the enhanced ability of the employee to serve the public trust;
 - c) Availability of funds for such reimbursement in the current fiscal year;
 - d) The number of courses the employee has submitted for reimbursement in the calendar year shall not be limited;
 - e) The employee's level of responsibility;
 - f) The estimate of the costs involved; and
 - g) Any potential lost time or productivity while the employee attends the program.

211:2 REIMBURSEMENT REQUIREMENTS

1. The County will authorize the reimbursement of tuition, required books, required software, lab fees, and registration fees based upon the required rate at the enrolled state of Florida public university and/or college. Tuition and fees from private institutions or out of state will not be reimbursed above the rate required by Florida Gulf Coast University for a similar course.
2. Reimbursement will be 100% for all grades at a "C" or above. There is no reimbursement for grades below a "C".
3. Non-graded courses shall be reimbursed at a rate of 100% upon satisfactory completion of the course.
4. Employees receiving educational reimbursement from other sources must inform the County and reimbursement will be adjusted accordingly.
5. Classes and assignments are to be completed outside of regular working hours, and should not interfere with the employee's work. Unsatisfactory job performance during enrollment may result in forfeiture of educational assistance.

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6. Employees shall not use any space, personnel, equipment, or supplies of the County in the process of fulfilling any of the requirements of the coursework for which they are being reimbursed.
7. Employees shall not be given any bonus or additional incentive pay for completion of a degree for which any costs were reimbursed under this Policy.

211:3 APPROVAL/REIMBURSEMENT PROCESS

1. An employee applying for educational assistance shall complete and provide the following forms available from the Human Resources Department, to his/her Supervisor and Department Director: the approval application, the Agreement for Reimbursement of Educational Assistance, and a copy of the course syllabus/course description. By signing the Agreement for Reimbursement the employee agrees to repay any educational reimbursements received in the twelve (12) months preceding his/her ceasing to be a full-time employee of the Lee County Board of County Commissioners. Reimbursement to Lee County will be debited from the employee's final pay. The County reserves the right to seek a judgment for any remaining balance owed after deducting funds from the final pay.
2. The Department shall evaluate the request and forward it along with a recommendation for approval/disapproval to the Department of Human Resources.
3. Office of the County Manager will determine whether the request is eligible for educational assistance and Human Resources will advise the Department Director and the employee of its conclusion.
4. Upon completion of coursework previously approved for educational assistance, the employee must submit a copy of the school grade report and original receipts to the Department of Human Resources.
5. Human Resources will verify expenses and submit the request for the appropriate amount of reimbursement from the Clerk of Court. Upon receipt by the Clerk of Court, the reimbursement will be issued by direct deposit to the employee's account or paycard.