

1120 DHS Educational Leave and Assistance

I. Purpose

The purpose of the Educational Leave and Assistance program is to provide opportunities for employees to obtain training or education which assists the Department of Human Services (DHS) in developing more competent personnel for the administration of DHS programs.

II. Scope

This policy is applicable to all regular status DHS employees.

III. Definitions

- (a) Full-Time Educational Leave - time off granted an employee to attend an accredited educational institution on a full-time basis (forty hours per week) for the purpose of obtaining a degree or professional certification relevant to the employment needs of DHS. (Refer to DHS APM Chapter 820 "Educational Leave and Assistance Procedures.")
- (b) Part-Time Educational Leave - time off of less than forty hours per week as agreed upon by the Department which is granted an employee to attend an accredited educational institution for the purpose of obtaining a degree or professional certification relevant to the employment needs of DHS.
- (c) Educational Assistance - payment for tuition, fees and books for job-related courses **not pursuant to a degree**, and provided to those who attend an educational institution during or after work hours (Reference DHS-1189, Application for Educational Assistance for Tuition/Fees/Books). Those attending during regular work hours are required to make up lost time through "flex-time" in accordance with Governor's Policy Directive on Standards of Performance, GPD-5, or by the use of annual or compensatory time in accordance with DHS Policy 1007 - Leave Policy.

IV. Policy

- (a) Educational Leave and Assistance shall not be activated for use until the division director seeking to utilize the assistance obtains review and approval from the DHS Chief Human Resources Officer, the DHS Chief Financial Officer (CFO), and the DHS Director. (Refer to the DHS Administrative Procedures Manual Chapter 820, "Educational Leave and Assistance Procedures.")
- (b) To qualify for full or part-time educational leave, employees must have a minimum of four years DHS employment with documented satisfactory job and conduct performance. To qualify for educational assistance, employees must have a minimum of four years DHS employment with documented satisfactory job and conduct performance.
- (c) If DHS activates educational leave, the agency shall not approve the leave to more than twelve (12) employees in any fiscal year. (Refer to Ark. Code Ann. 21-4-211 (6)(B).)

Funding

- (d) Requests for educational leave and assistance shall always be subject to the availability of funds as determined by the DHS CFO and in accordance with applicable state laws, rules, and regulations.
- (e) An employee cannot receive payment for tuition, fees, books or transportation while on full-time or part-time educational leave unless such sums have been specifically appropriated by the Arkansas General Assembly and then internally by the DHS Chief Human Resources Officer, the DHS CFO, and the DHS Director.

Employee Obligation

- (f) Employees must remain employed with DHS for a minimum of two months for each month spent on full-time educational leave, or two weeks for every one week spent on part-time educational leave. Employees who leave shall reimburse DHS for the remaining time owed to the agency. (*Refer to Form DHS-1190, "Educational Leave Contract" and Ark. Code Ann. § 21-4-211 (1-2).*)

Individual Approvals

- (g) All applications for educational leave and assistance must be approved through the Division/Office Director. All applications (approved or denied) will be forwarded to the Educational Leave/Tuition Assistance Coordinator for recording and processing. The Coordinator will then forward all recommended requests back to the Division Director for record keeping and monitoring purposes.
- (h) Once this program is activated by the agency and tuition assistance requests are approved by the Division/Office Director, the requests shall be forwarded to the Coordinator who will then forward them to the Department of Finance and Administration (DFA), Office of Accounting, for final approval/disapproval. Once final DFA approval/denial is received, the Coordinator will return the documents to the appropriate Division Director/Office.

Equal Opportunity

- (i) When implemented, the Educational Leave and Assistance program shall be administered equitably. Employees shall not be discriminated against based on their race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, or disability as defined in the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Department Contact

- (j) Any questions concerning Educational Leave and Assistance should be directed to DHS Human Resources.