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		EMPLOYEE CONTINUING DEVELOPMENT & EDUCATION BENEFITS	

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SUMMARY of REVISION/REVIEW

Title change. Changes throughout. Updated Attachment A, C and removed D.
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APPROVED:



Scott R. Frakes, Director
Nebraska Department of Correctional Services

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PURPOSE

To encourage employees to continue their education and to provide an agency-wide policy regarding educational benefits to Nebraska Department of Correctional Services (NDCS) employees.

GENERAL

Under continuing education, employees are encouraged to continue their education and pursue life-long learning. NDCS encourages and supports employee participation in approved outside workshops, professional meetings, seminars, similar work-related activities, and other educational programs (outside training/education which includes university, college, and community college credit hour courses), and hereafter known as program.

Under employee educational benefits, the policy provides educational assistance to employees for enhancing their current work, performance and career opportunities with NDCS, and hereafter referred to as course/class.

PROCEDURE

I. TYPES of CONTINUING EDUCATIONAL/DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

A. Required Education/Development

Courses on site or on line required and pre-approved by NDCS. All State of Nebraska on-line courses known as Employee Development Center (EDC) are courses requiring pre-approval by the Warden/Program Administrator or designee.

B. Non-Required Education/Development

Courses voluntarily taken by the employee, which are eligible for tuition reimbursement, and are approved by the Warden/Program Administrator prior to the start of the course.

II. REQUIRED EDUCATION/DEVELOPMENT - Required Courses

When an employee is required to attend on site or on-line courses, including State of Nebraska EDC on-line courses, credit hours or training seminars, the following rules apply:

A. The expenses of the course/training will be paid in full by NDCS.

B. For employees eligible for overtime, hours spent in the required course will be compensated as hours worked.

C. For State of Nebraska EDC on-line course registration and pre-approvals are electronically processed via the State of Nebraska EDC program. Employees can access this information from their EDC transcript page on their facility kiosk site(s). A link is accessible on the Q Drive home page called "Employee Development Center."

1. Employees eligible to earn overtime and approved to take an EDC on-line course must take the EDC course during normal work hours. This complies

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with the Fair Labor Standards Act. An overtime eligible employee cannot take an EDC on their own time.

2. Employees not eligible for overtime and if approved to take an EDC on-line course can do so outside their normal work schedule subject to their Facility/Program's requirements.

III. NON-REQUIRED EDUCATION/DEVELOPMENT

When an employee intends to take part in educational/development opportunities which are not required by NDCS:

A. The Department's *continuing education/development program* may apply, provided:

1. Employee receives prior approval by submitting a Travel Request form (see AR 113.14 *Employee Reimbursement* Attachment B) to their Warden/Program Administrator or designee for approval.
2. The Warden/Program Administrator or designee will determine whether to grant work time and the amount for employee's expense reimbursement for the requested program/development as part of the approval procedure.

B. The Department's *tuition assistance program* may apply, provided:

1. The employee is permanent full time or part-time, with the exception of teachers, and has satisfactorily completed their original probationary period.
 - Teachers are covered under the SCATA Labor Contract. Please refer to the Teacher AR 112.44, *Education Administration*.
2. Courses are taken from a regionally accredited school.
3. The employee shall complete and submit a current Tuition Assistance Request (Attachment A) to their Warden/Program Administrator or designee for **securing approval prior to the start of the course**. The Warden/Program Administrator's office shall note the date on each Tuition Assistance application to denote the date received. If the Warden/Program Administrator's approval is not received prior to the start of the course, the request will be denied and returned to the employee. The Warden/Program Administrator or designee forwards the request to Central Office Human Resources Administrative Assistant I who verifies eligible credit hours and qualifying courses per policy.
4. The Central Office Human Resources Administrative Assistant I verification is subject to review by the Agency Assistant Human Resource Administrator, who is the Director's designee.

C. Requirements for approval of a *tuition assistance course application*:

1. Seminars, non-credit workshops, or non-credit courses are not eligible for tuition assistance. Course duplication is not allowed unless the employee

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retakes the course if receiving a grade of C- or less, or not passing, or incomplete. An employee is unable to be reimbursed twice for the same course.

2. Participation of the employee in course work may not interfere with normally scheduled work hours, unless approval of a flexible schedule is obtained from the Warden/Program Administrator/designee. If flexible schedule agreements are approved, such schedule shall ensure the employee's obligation to NDCS, (i.e., 40 hours for a full-time employee).
 3. An application for each course must be submitted on the **current** form (Attachment A). If not, application will be returned as unacceptable. A resubmitted form must adhere to approval timelines (III.B.3). The **course** schedule identifying school name, course title, start date, and credit hours for the course must be attached to the application. A Tuition Assistance Frequently Asked Question sheet is available to assist you with the process (Attachment B).
 4. A maximum of 15 semester credit hours per fiscal year is available for reimbursement. The applicable fiscal year is determined by the course start date, not the end date. Quarterly or other programmed school credit hours are converted to semester credit hours.
 5. Flow of application of tuition assistance (Attachment C) will be: Employee to Warden/Program Administrator or designee, to the Agency Human Resources Administrator or designee, to the Deputy Director of Administrative Services (Director's designee). Upon approval, original will be sent to the respective Facility/Program Business Manager, with a copy to the employee. If denied, notification will be sent to the employee and Warden/Program Administrator.
 6. Any change for an approved tuition assistance application requires the employee to inform Central Office HR Administrative Assistant I. Any change in the course's status includes but is not limited to course dropped, full, changed college, etc. This ensures the accuracy of eligible courses and semester credit hours.
- D. As part of the Agency Annual In-Service training requirements, employees may receive up to 20 hours maximum training credit in EDC for completed continuing education programs. Upon receiving a grade of at least a 'C-', or 'Pass' if a Pass/Fail grade is given it is the employee's responsibility to enter this information into EDC via external training. Quarterly or other program school credit hours are converted to semester credit hours as is the case for tuition reimbursement. Please refer to Attachment D for the conversion rate. This must be done within 60 days of completion of the course or by the Monday of the last full work week in June of that current fiscal year. This can be utilized for both reimbursed and non-reimbursed continuing education programs.

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IV. REIMBURSEMENT

- A. The continuing education program will be reimbursed for the allotted amount, which was determined at time of approval, upon successful completion of the program.
- B. The tuition assistance course reimbursement process is:
 1. Upon the successful completion of the course by the employee, approved tuition assistance will be reimbursed up to, but not to exceed, 100 percent of the University of Nebraska – Lincoln’s resident current hourly tuition rate. Reimbursement is for tuition costs only. Fees, books, etc. are not part of the tuition costs.
 2. Employees eligible for other educational reimbursements through other programs shall use those programs first. If the cost of an approved course is more than the amount available from other sources, NDCS may reimburse the employee for up to 100% of the difference for tuition costs only, but not to exceed amount determined in section IV.B.1.
- C. Reimbursement is obtained by the employee submitting a completed Expense Reimbursement Request (ERR) to the Facility/Program Business Manager **within 60 calendar days following completion of the course and grades issued**. Failure to submit within the required timeframe voids reimbursement eligibility per state statute §81-1174, and following state statute, will not be reimbursed. Refer to **AR 113.14, Employee Reimbursement**. The Expense Reimbursement Request (ERR) may be found on the Q drive in Forms > Expense Reimbursement Form – Acctg > Expense Reimbursement Request Current.
 1. Location of a sample form completed for *continuing education program*: Q:\-Forms\Expense Reimbursement Form - Acctg\Sample - Expense Reimbursement Requests – Example 1 or 2 Attend a Conferencs.xls
The following must be attached to the ERR:
 - a. Approved Continuing Education Request
 - b. Certificate of Completion or Attendance
 - c. Detailed invoice of charges incurred
 2. Location of a sample form completed for *Tuition Assistance course*: Q:\Forms\Expense Reimbursement Form – Acctg\Sample – Expense Reimbursement Requests\Exp Reimb Req – Example 6 Tuition Assistance.xls. The following must be attached to the ERR:
 - a. Completed approved Application for Tuition Assistance.
 - b. Invoice for the tuition charges.
 - c. Copy of grade or transcript showing completion of the course with a grade of C- or above or Pass.
 3. Once completed by employee and signed by their supervisor the employee delivers the completed ERR and attachments to the Facility/Program Business Manager. The Facility/Program Business Manager will date stamp the Expense Reimbursement Request to denote the date received, attach a

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copy of the Application for Tuition Assistance, review the documents, request any addition documentation, and sign for approval.

4. The Business Manager submits the ERR and documentation to Central Office Accounting for approval and payment processing.

D. Employee Requirement to Repay Reimbursed Tuition Assistance

Employees receiving tuition assistance reimbursements shall remain employed with NDCS for at least 12 months following course completion date. If employed less than 12 months from course completion date, repayment amount is pro-rata, based on the amount of time remaining in the 12 months from the course completion date and calculated by the Agency Controller or designee. Failure to repay reimbursed tuition assistance will change your favorable resignation status to unfavorable. Should this happen, this information will be considered in the rehiring decision should you seek re-employment with NDCS. In these situations, the Agency Human Resources Administrator notifies the employee of their obligation to repay, and possible consequences if not making repayment. (Attachment E.)

E. Income Tax Responsibilities

It is recommended that each employee review their reimbursements with appropriate tax professionals regarding such reimbursements.

V. Employee Development Center (EDC) On-Line Courses

Numerous on-line courses are available via the Employee Development Center (EDC), but some courses have monetary charges. If so, the cost is charged to the employee's business unit. These courses, whether free or have monetary charges, require pre-approval by the Warden/Program Administrator or designee in EDC before the employee can participate in the course. If the employee is overtime eligible, the course must be taken during work time – no overtime can occur for EDC on-line courses. Billing for EDC on-line courses will occur at the time of registration regardless if the employee ever completes the course. Please refer to AR 114.05 *In-Service* for additional details.

REFERENCE

I. Administrative Regulations:

- A. AR 112.44 *Education Administration*
- B. AR 113.14 *Employee Reimbursement*
- C. AR 114.05 *In-Service Training*

II. ATTACHMENTS:

- A. Application for Tuition Assistance (DCS-A-per-005-pc REV, 05/2016)
- B. Tuition Assistance Frequently Asked Questions, Rev, 4/12

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- C. NDCS Tuition Assistance Flowchart, Rev, 05/2016
- D. Agency Notice to Employee Needing to Repay the Reimbursed Tuition Assistance, Rev, 4/14
- III. ACA STANDARDS
 - A. Adult Correctional Institutions (fourth edition): 4-4093, 4-4094
 - B. Adult Community Residential Services (fourth edition): 4-ACRS-7B-19.