

## Administrative Order



**Administrative Order No.:** 7-4

**Title:** Tuition Refund Program

**Ordered:** 11/6/2003

**Effective:** 11/16/2003

### **AUTHORITY:**

Section 4.02 of the Miami-Dade County Charter and Section 2.28 of the Miami-Dade County Code.

### **SUPERSEDES:**

This Administrative Order supersedes Administrative Order No. 7-4, dated July 25, 1995.

### **POLICY:**

It is established County policy, approved by the Board of County Commissioners on August 27, 1963, to promote a program encouraging County employees to improve their effectiveness by obtaining additional training. This program provides that employees enrolled in accredited educational institutions may be reimbursed for 50% of tuition costs, for approved coursework which will enable them to improve their performance in their current positions and prepare them for increased responsibilities.

Tuition is the fee for instruction and lab fees only, and does not include textbooks, exams, audit fees, or any other expenses.

### **QUALIFICATIONS:**

All employees who take "approved" coursework and achieve a grade that is "C" or higher and is acceptable by the school as a passing grade, will be entitled to a refund of 50% of tuition costs upon completion of the course.

Employees receiving financial assistance including scholarships, fellowships, grants, and/or Veteran's benefits, will be eligible for a refund of 50% of tuition costs after the financial assistance has been applied to the tuition costs.

## **ELIGIBILITY OF EMPLOYEE:**

All full-time career employees are eligible for participation in the Tuition Refund Program if the following requirements are met:

- (a) Completion of 13 pay periods of full time employment with the County.
- (b) An overall evaluation of “satisfactory” or higher on the latest employee performance evaluation preceding the beginning of classes.

Exception: An employee whose latest overall evaluation is less than “satisfactory” may be eligible for Tuition Refund for coursework that relates to specific areas of weak performance.

- (c) Exempt employees must have received a satisfactory rating from their supervisors on the latest performance review.

## **ELIGIBILITY OF COURSEWORK:**

Guidelines for establishing eligible coursework are as follows:

- (a) Degree and certification programs at accredited institutions which relate directly to career opportunities within Miami-Dade County are eligible for approval.
- (b) For those employees who have been approved for a degree program, all general education courses specifically required by the school will be approved.
- (c) All other coursework will be considered on a course by course determination.
- (d) Employees who have applications on file on the effective date of this Administrative Order, and who otherwise meet eligibility requirements, shall have their applications considered herewith.
- (e) All courses must be taken outside of working hours unless the employee’s Department Director approves the use of annual leave, compensatory time, or holiday leave. If Administrative Leave is granted to take a course during working hours, no Tuition Refund will be granted.
- (f) On-line Internet courses and programs provided by accredited Florida-based educational institutions are eligible for tuition reimbursement. For on-line Internet courses and programs at accredited educational institutions not based in Florida, the Tuition Refund Appeal Board will review requests for reimbursement on a

case-by-case basis. The Employee Relations Department must receive such requests at least 30 days prior to the start of the course or program.

**TUITION REFUND COORDINATOR:**

The Employee Relations Department Tuition Refund Coordinator shall maintain program oversight responsibilities to include the following:

- (a) Resolve any problems or discrepancies with the interpretation of Administrative Order 7-4.
- (b) Review all supporting documents submitted by the departments to ensure proper accountability for refund disbursement.
- (c) Calculate the 50% refund.
- (d) Approve and submit all refund requests for final disbursement.
- (e) Resolve problems and issues affecting the program.
- (f) Process appeals as required.

**DEPARTMENT DIRECTOR:**

The Department Directors shall be responsible for verifying that all approved coursework is in compliance with Administrative Order 7-4, as well as all other aspects of the program. Department Directors shall approve or disapprove all reimbursements for degrees, programs, and coursework for employees within their departments in accordance with Tuition Reimbursement Program policies and procedures.

**OBLIGATION:**

All employees receiving reimbursement under this program will be obligated to remain in the employ of the County for a minimum of one (1) year following completion of the coursework. Employees terminating from the County service prior to the expiration of this period will reimburse the County for refunds received during the final year of employment through deductions from their final payroll check. If the final paycheck is insufficient, the employee will still be responsible for the reimbursement. No reimbursement will be required of those employees who have been laid off and have been previously approved for coursework. If the employee is deceased, no reimbursement will be required from the family of the employee.

## **APPLICATION PROCEDURE:**

Unless otherwise indicated in this Administrative Order, employees desiring to participate in the Tuition Refund Program shall submit to their Department Director an application for coursework/degree approval no later than thirty days following the start of classes.

## **COURSEWORK DEGREE REVIEW AND APPROVAL:**

The Department Director shall approve or disapprove the employee's request after verifying the employee's eligibility for participation in the program.

### **(a) For Approval**

After the Department Director approves the request, a copy of the original application is returned to the employee advising them of the approval.

### **(b) For Disapproval**

If the Department Director disapproves the application, he or she shall advise the employee of the reason for the rejection no later than 30 days from the date of the receipt of the application.

## **REIMBURSEMENT:**

All approved applicants will submit a request for reimbursement, along with tuition receipts, official grade notifications, and all supporting documentation, to their Department Director no later than thirty days from the receipt of the grades. The Departments shall submit to the Tuition Refund Coordinator all applications, whether approved or disapproved, with the supporting documents for final review and reimbursement approval.

## **PENALTIES:**

Should an employee submit documentation which the employee knows is false or intentionally misleading in order to receive benefits for which the employee is not entitled, the employee will be deemed ineligible to continue to participate in the tuition reimbursement program and must repay Miami-Dade County for any tuition reimbursements received while in the County's employ. The employee may be subject to further disciplinary action, including, but not limited to, dismissal from the County service.

**APPEALS:**

Any applicant may appeal the action taken by the Tuition Refund Coordinator or the Department Director by submitting a written statement to the Coordinator within 30 days from the day of the action describing how and why the course in question is in compliance with the guidelines and intent of the program. The Tuition Refund Appeal Board will convene on a monthly basis as necessary to review all appeals. This committee shall consist of three permanent members: a representative from the Employee Relations Department Career Development Division; Personnel Services Division; and Administrative Services Division. The Coordinator shall be responsible for notifying the applicant of the Appeal Board's decision.

This Administrative Order is hereby submitted to the Board of County Commissioners of Miami-Dade County, Florida.

George M. Burgess  
County Manager