

Training and Education Programs

The Texas Medical Board (TMB) values employee education and self-improvement. As such, TMB strives to support all eligible employees in the pursuit of attaining educational goals for career enhancement and improved agency operations. As these programs demonstrate TMB's commitment to employees, so too shall the employees using these programs demonstrate a commitment to their educational goals and TMB. Consequently, there are very high standards for initial and continued eligibility for these programs.

Pursuant to Texas Government Code Chapter 656, TMB provides employees various training programs in order to perform their job duties and tuition assistance for eligible employees pursuing college-level courses from an accredited institution of higher education and standardized knowledge exams to obtain and maintain professional credentials. Approval will be considered if such training or educational opportunities will enhance the employee's ability to perform current job duties, enable the employee to perform prospective job duties, and be relevant to the employee's future career goals with the agency.

The Texas Medical Board also provides training on certain employment laws and other general workplace issues. All employees are required to take employment discrimination and sexual harassment prevention training. New employees shall receive employment discrimination training no later than 30 days after the date of hire. Employees who complete the training are required to sign a certificate verifying their completion of the training program. Additional employment discrimination and sexual harassment training is required for each employee every two years after employment.

Tuition Assistance Program

Contingent upon availability of TMB's resources, TMB may financially assist eligible employees with tuition cost through the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP). The maximum tuition assistance that shall be granted by the Executive Director is \$5,000 per full-time employee per state fiscal year (September 1 through August 31). Any remaining balance does not carry over to a new fiscal year. Tuition cost includes tuition and building, lab, and student services fees. A decision will be made by the Executive Director with a recommendation from the Department Manager on an applying employee's eligibility for the program.

Classified full-time employees may apply for tuition reimbursement to attend college-level courses at an accredited institution of his or her choice under the following provisions:

- employee must be working full-time and have been employed by TMB for twelve (12) consecutive months;
- employee must be enrolled in a two-year associate degree, four-year undergraduate degree or graduate degree specifically relevant to the employee's duties or prospective duties within TMB;
- course(s) must be part of a degree plan designed to improve the employee's performance or qualify the employee for another position within TMB;
- employee must complete all courses during the semester, quarter, or term with a passing grade of "A"
- employee must provide Human Resources with credible proof of completion and passage of the course(s) by the employee;
- employee's job performance must be a minimum 4.0 out of 5.0 on all rated areas in the most recent performance appraisal (within the last 12 months) on file; and

- employee must have no disciplinary action or performance improvement plan during the twenty-four (24) months prior to applying for tuition assistance.

Employees participating in TAP shall:

- maintain an overall Grade Point Average (GPA) of 3.0 or better on a 4.0 scale for all college courses taken at the current educational institution;
- not have received a failing grade for any course or have any course with an outstanding “Incomplete” status at the current educational institution;
- observe and comply with all agency policies and work rules;
- maintain an average 4.0 out of 5.0 on all rated areas of performance appraisals since beginning TAP;
- for semesters where tuition reimbursement is sought, provide Human Resources with:
 - o a copy of all of his or her performance appraisals since beginning TAP or the most recent performance appraisal if seeking tuition reimbursement for the first time;
 - o credible proof of enrollment in the accredited educational institution;
 - o a copy of the degree plan;
 - o passing grade(s) of course(s);
 - o official transcript of all course work taken at the educational institution;
 - o cost of tuition, as evidenced by an official invoice or bill from the educational institution; and
 - o proof of payment to the educational institution after all other federal, state, scholarship, grant, etc. payments have been applied;
- by August 15 of each year, submit his or her request for reimbursement for courses completed at any point during the current fiscal year for consideration. The August 15 date may be extended upon request to the Executive Director, but shall not extend past August 31 for any reason.;
- agree in writing, prior to receiving any reimbursement, to a 12-month-service commitment with TMB following receipt of the reimbursement;
- comply with the length of service requirement or be required to reimburse the agency for all related cost associated with TAP;
- repay the agency the amount of the tuition assistance approved if the employee involuntarily separates from the agency prior to the completion of the obligatory service period; and
- seek approval to flex his or her work schedule from his or her manager and/or supervisor as long as there is no negative impact on his or her peers or to the work responsibilities of the employee participating in TAP.

The Texas Medical Board may pay tuition only for courses relevant to the qualifying employee’s position within TMB and approved under the program. Employees must pay for and pass the course(s) first and seek reimbursement later, should funding be available and granted by the Executive Director. While participating in TAP, employees may apply for and accept other positions with TMB. Additionally, transferring to another position and/or department will not invalidate the participant’s eligibility for tuition reimbursement. Employees absent from work without leave or on a leave of absence (30 working days or more) are not eligible for tuition assistance.

The Tuition Assistance Program is contingent upon available funds at the end of each fiscal year and the needs of the agency. There are currently no funds set aside or allocated to this program. Discretion and authority to approve reimbursement to any employee rests solely with the Executive Director and is not guaranteed during any fiscal year. Determinations on granting reimbursement will be made by the Executive Director during the last month of each fiscal year. If more than one eligible employee requests

reimbursement and each eligible employee already meets all of the above requirements, then the Executive Director will grant funding, should there be any approved, evenly among all eligible courses.

For example, if there are \$10,000 approved for TAP by the Executive Director and there are nine eligible employees who have successfully met the TAP requirements for 10 courses, then each course would receive \$1,000 for TAP with one employee receiving \$2,000 total for the two courses the employee completed.

The Executive Director has sole discretion in the interpretation and application of this policy, but is statutorily ineligible to participate in the Tuition Assistance Program.

Educational Leave Program

Employees are allowed to participate in both the Tuition Assistance Program and the Educational Leave Program (ELP) at the same time and during the same fiscal year. Classified full-time employees may apply for paid leave in order to attend college level courses at an accredited institution of his or her choice under the following provisions:

- the employee must be working full-time and have been employed by TMB for twelve (12) consecutive months;
- the employee may be excused for up to three (3) hours per week during regular office hours to attend college courses without using leave time;
- the course must be part of a degree plan designed to improve the employee's performance or qualify the employee for another position within TMB;
- if the employee completes the course or all courses during ELP period with a passing grade of "B" or better, then the employee is eligible to continue in ELP;
- if the employee completes any course during the ELP period with:
 - o a grade of "C", then the employee is ineligible for ELP during the next semester, including the summer semester;
 - o a grade of "D", then the employee is ineligible for ELP for one full academic year from the end of the semester in which the "D" grade was received;
 - o a grade of "F", then the employee must reimburse TMB for the educational leave taken and is ineligible for future participation in ELP;
 - o an "Incomplete", then the employee is ineligible for future participation in ELP until the "Incomplete" is resolved with a letter grade;
 - The final letter grade will determine eligibility for ELP as detailed above;
 - If no letter grade is earned by the end of the next semester, then the course will be deemed to have resulted in a grade of "F";
 - If an employee voluntarily or involuntarily leaves TMB during the pendency of an "Incomplete", then the course will be deemed to have resulted in a grade of "F";
- if the course is dropped or withdrawn from by the employee at any point, then the employee must reimburse TMB, either financially and/or by amending timesheets to reflect the use of vacation, compensatory time, or some other type of eligible leave except for sick leave, for the educational leave taken up to the date the course is dropped or withdrawn from, but is eligible to request ELP in future semesters;
- the employee must provide his or her Department Manager with credible proof of completion and passage of the course(s) by the employee; and

- the employee's job performance must be satisfactory with a minimum 3.0 out of 5.0 on all rated areas in the most recent performance appraisal (within the last 12 months) on file.

*The Executive Director may waive the mandatory ineligibility periods upon submission of written proof or explanation of extenuating circumstances for a grade of "C", severe extenuating circumstances for a grade of "D", and extreme extenuating circumstances for a grade of "F" or "Incomplete". Under no circumstances will an employee be waived from reimbursing TMB for the education leave taken during which a grade of "F" is earned, an "Incomplete" is deemed to have resulted in a grade of "F", or a course is dropped or withdrawn from at any point.

An eligible employee wishing to apply for Educational Leave must:

- maintain an overall GPA of 3.0 or better on a 4.0 scale for all college courses taken at the current educational institution;
- not have received a failing grade for any course or have any course with an outstanding "Incomplete" status at the current educational institution;
- submit a request and obtain approval from Human Resources and their Department Manager;
- submit a request to the Executive Director with a copy of the current performance appraisal, grade transcripts from course work previously taken under the program (if applicable), and a copy of the degree plan; and
- submit his or her request for review at least four weeks prior to the date of registration for classes. Requests received too late for processing will be automatically denied unless good cause is provided in writing to and approved by the Executive Director;

Approval will be contingent upon there being sufficient staff resources to fulfill the department's work requirements, as determined in the sole discretion of the employee's manager. Approval authority for participation in ELP is in the sole discretion of the Executive Director. The Executive Director has sole discretion in the interpretation and application of this policy.

Official grade reports or transcripts with the college/university's name must be submitted to Human Resources as soon as they are available. Satisfactory completion of the course work, as detailed above, is required in order for the employee to be eligible to reapply for Educational Leave consideration. An employee must use his/her own leave time for traveling to and from class. As with all other time away from work, this must be approved prior to the actual absence.

If the employee is absent from work on days on which he or she normally attends class, the employee is to submit a leave form for the time missed from work without regard to Education Leave. Leave time must cover the time normally spent in class.