

**ROCKINGHAM COUNTY**  
**EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE REIMBURSEMENT PROGRAM**

**OBJECTIVE:**

Rockingham County strongly encourages employees to pursue additional formal education and believes it has a positive impact on an employee's contribution to the County. The County supports self-development and educational efforts that will enhance an employee's knowledge and skills, thus improving potential for future opportunities within the County.

**DEFINITIONS:**

- Minimum eligibility – one (1) year of continuous benefit-eligible service
- Matriculating – coursework leading to a degree
- Non-matriculating – coursework that does not lead to a degree
- Review Committee – comprises of (1) Division Director, Human Resources Director, and (1) Commissioner.

**SCOPE OF POLICY:**

Rockingham County will provide educational assistance reimbursement, prorated based on regularly scheduled hours worked, to all eligible employees subject to personnel policies, who have completed one year of continuous service as a benefit-eligible employee. To maintain eligibility, an employee must remain on the active payroll as a benefit-eligible employee and be performing their job satisfactorily through completion of each course.

Under this program, employees may pursue a degree or take individual courses at approved and accredited educational institutions (matriculating or non-matriculating), provided the course of study is related to the employee's current position or a probable future assignment within their respective division and the County approves the course(s).

While the Educational Assistance Reimbursement Program is expected to enhance an employee's performance and professional abilities, Rockingham County cannot guarantee that participation in this program will entitle the employee to advancement, a different job assignment, or pay increase.

Class attendance and completion of study assignments shall be accomplished outside of the employee's regular working hours.

Written requests for educational assistance reimbursement must be approved prior to enrollment.

The County will not reimburse the employee to retake a course.

**COVERED EXPENSES:**

Subject to availability of funds, and on a first-come, first-served basis, expenses eligible for reimbursement include tuition, registration, and required fees such as building use and lab fees.

Education Assistance Reimbursement for higher education courses will be on a sliding scale as follows:

#### **OPTION I:**

Major Specific Courses (Courses that are directly related to their field of study and major).

- Courses that fall into this category will receive the following reimbursement based on Grade received or a Pass, in the case of Pass/Fail courses:
  - A = One hundred percent (100%)
  - B = Ninety percent (90%)
  - C = Eighty percent (80%)

#### **OPTION II:**

General Education and Elective Courses (Courses that are required to graduate or earn their degree but are not specific to their major).

- Courses that fall into this category will receive the following reimbursement based on Grade received or a Pass, in the case of Pass/Fail courses:
  - A = Ninety percent (90%)
  - B = Eighty percent (80%)
  - C = Seventy percent (70%)

Reimbursement not to exceed up to three (3) courses or \$4,000 per calendar year.

Other miscellaneous expenses, such as parking, travel or commuting, supplies, social dues, athletic fees, computer access charges, etc. are not reimbursable. County reimbursement will be reduced by any other financial aid that does not have to be repaid (such as the GI Bill, scholarships and grants).

Rockingham County has sole discretion in determining whether a course relates to an employee's current job duties or a foreseeable future position. Human Resources will determine which Option (I or II) applies to the request submitted. Employees should contact the Human Resources Department for more information or questions about the Educational Assistance Reimbursement Program.

Employees are required to remain in their department and in the employment of Rockingham County for a period of one (1) year following the completion of each course. The total County contribution will be forgiven at one-quarter (1/4) of the total contribution per three (3) month period. At the end of twelve (12) months following the completion of each course, and of continued benefits-eligible employment, the debt will be forgiven.

#### **FUNDING:**

The Board of Commissioners reserves the right to determine the annual budgetary amount for the Educational Assistance Program. Upon passage of the annual Delegation-approved Rockingham County budget, funds will be made available. The County reserves the right to distribute any available funds for this program.

#### **PROCEDURE:**

- A. An application form must be completed before registering for the course and submitted for pre-approval to the Human Resources Department. Forms may be obtained from the Human Resources Department or from the County website. Applications will be reviewed with consideration relevancy of course to an employee's job, tenure, personnel record, job performance, as well as budgetary constraints at time of submission.
- B. The application form, once reviewed by the Human Resources Department, will be forwarded to the O/DD for their review. The application will be returned to the employee, advising them of the outcome. If approved, they may register for the course.
- C. At the time of registration, the employee will pay the full cost of the tuition.

- D. Reimbursable expenses must be submitted for payment within sixty (60) days from the end of each approved course. An official grade record and/or certification of completion and itemized receipt/s documenting all the expenses must be submitted for reimbursement. Reimbursement will not be processed without this information.
- E. Once the course is completed, the employee should return the Educational Assistance Reimbursement Program form back to the Human Resources Department with the Course Completion portion completed, which is located at the top of page 2, including with it the supporting documents.
- F. The application, along with supporting documents, will then be submitted to the Review Committee for recommendation. The Review Committee will ensure that the request meets the terms outlined in the policy.
- G. If recommended and approved by the Review Committee, the application will be brought forward by the Human Resources Department for consideration to the Board of Commissioners.
- H. Upon approval by the Board of Commissioners, the Human Resources Department will develop the warrant and submit it to the Finance Department for processing. Applications once approved will be applicable for six (6) months from the date of the Board of Commissioners' approval.
- I. The Educational Assistance Reimbursement documents will be added to the employee's personnel file at the conclusion of the reimbursement.

An employee who does not complete their course prior to the end of employment (including involuntary termination) will not be eligible for reimbursement. Individuals leaving benefits-eligible employment will be required to repay the County for any outstanding liabilities per the terms described herein.

This policy is a broad guideline developed by the County to assist with organizational decisions. The procedures detail how the policy should be applied. It is not possible to address every situation or circumstance, and decisions regarding this benefit will be made on a case-by-case basis. Rockingham County will make every effort to ensure that all employees are treated fairly and equitably. Please contact the Human Resources Department at 603-679-9337, regarding any questions about the Educational Assistance Program.

The LNA Apprentice Program falls under the Educational Assistance Reimbursement Program.

**LNA APPRENTICE PROGRAM:**

Students entering an approved LNA Apprentice Program at one of the County's approved training entities will be required to sign an LNA Apprentice Program Training Reimbursement Agreement. The County has offered to provide certain LNA training in anticipation that the student will continue to work for the County as an LNA, full-time, for at least one (1) year from the completion date of the training so that the County may recover some of the cost of the investment. The Agreement is not intended to constitute any type of employment agreement or guarantee of continued employment. The students also understand that the County would not provide such training unless the student intended to continue to work for Rockingham County and agreed to reimburse the County under certain circumstances outlined in the agreement.

Funding for the LNA Apprentice Program will be appropriated through the County's Educational Assistance Reimbursement Program budget line. This program may be discontinued if funds are depleted in the budget line or a change in funding. Program information is available in the LNA Apprentice Program Contract. Please contact Human Resources at 603-679-9337 for questions related to this program.