

## Educational Assistance Program

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Revision Date: 1-27-2022  
Human Resources Benefits

### 1. Purpose

Augusta Health encourages team members to continue their formal education.

### 2. Scope

Full-time and regular part-time team members with no current counseling who have a satisfactory rating on most recent performance evaluation and who have continuous employment for 90 days

### 3. Definitions

- N/A

### 4. Policy

- A. Team members are encouraged to grow professionally in their careers.
- B. Team members have the opportunity to utilize the educational assistance program for eligible education expenses and/or student loan repayment assistance for job-related education (for any Augusta Health job the team member is currently in or could grow into through promotion or transfer).
  1. This could include development for a specific skill, preparing for or maintaining a license or certification, taking educational classes, or earning a degree.

### 5. Procedure

#### A. General Guidelines

1. Augusta Health is proud to reimburse eligible team members for tuition and book expenses, up to a maximum of \$5,250 per year for full-time team members and up to \$2,625 per year for part-time team members for continuing education through an accredited program that either offers growth in an area related to his or her current position or that may lead to promotional opportunities.
  - a. This education may include college credit courses, continuing education unit courses, seminars and certification tests that are job-related.
  - b. The tuition reimbursement benefit does not include technology, and/or service fees. Currently according to IRS rules education assistance is tax-free, as it is an Augusta Health requirement that an approved course have a reasonable relationship to the business of Augusta Health. Under IRS rules, tuition reimbursement is not tax-free for courses that involve sports, games, or hobbies that (a) do not have a reasonable relationship to the business of Augusta Health, and/or (b) are not required as part of a degree program.
  - c. An employee must secure a passing grade of "B" or better for graduate courses; a grade of "C" or better for undergraduate courses, the equivalent or obtain a certification to receive any

- reimbursement. Expenses must be validated by receipts and a copy of the final grade or certification received.
2. The types of programs a team member may benefit from under the educational assistance benefit include:
    - a. Adult education programs
    - b. Health and hospital vocational schools and diploma programs
    - c. Accredited colleges: associate, bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degree programs
  3. Eligible team members are encouraged to apply for educational assistance. For a team member to receive the benefit, the education must be related to the team member's current job or a job within Augusta Health in which the team member may potentially grow to be eligible. In addition, team members are to meet the following conditions:
    - a. Cannot be in the final step of team member counseling
    - b. One year of continuous employment with Augusta Health
    - c. Satisfactory rating on their most current performance evaluation
  4. Received a grade no lower than a "B" for graduate level or a "C" for undergraduate level in the class for which reimbursement is sought (if no grade, then a certificate of completion). The educational assistance benefit is paid on a reimbursement basis.
  5. The reimbursement will also not be paid if:
    - a. A team member's work relationship ends with Augusta Health for any reason prior to satisfying all requirements for reimbursement
    - b. The team member's work classification is reduced to less than regular part-time prior to satisfying all requirements for reimbursement
    - c. The team member has entered into the final step of team member counseling

#### **B. Team Member Responsibilities**

1. Team members are encouraged to apply for the education assistance benefit.
2. This may be done by completing an Application for Educational Assistance and turning it in to Human Resources. Human Resources determines if a team member is eligible for the tuition reimbursement benefit.
3. A team member must submit a separate application for each school semester or quarter, with a course curriculum and class schedule, no later than the following dates:
  - a. Fall Semester August 1
  - b. Spring Semester December 1
  - c. Summer Semester May 1
  - d. Online or Continuous At least 30 days prior to beginning class
4. These deadlines may be prior to official registration dates at area schools.

- a. If this is the case, the team member is to submit the course in which he/she plans to enroll.
  - b. If during registration a team member is unable to get the course, a request may be made to change to another comparable course (same number of hours and within the approved curriculum).
  - c. These dates are necessary for Augusta Health to have enough time to approve or disapprove each course, according to hospital needs and budget.
  - d. Team members will be notified whether the course is approved. If a decision is made not to approve the courses or curriculum requested, an explanation will be provided to the team member.
  - e. Upon approval, the team member is to complete the Education Assistance Benefit Agreement.
5. Team members approved for the education assistance are to submit grade reports or certificates of completion and course payment receipts to Human Resources within 30 days after the completion of the course. The team member must receive at least a "B" for graduate level course or a "C" for undergraduate level course to be reimbursed for that course.
  6. The team member will be issued education assistance reimbursement funds through their payroll check. All documents regarding the request, approval, and payment for reimbursement will become a permanent part of the team member's personnel record.
  7. Augusta Health is making a special investment in a team member by providing the tuition reimbursement benefit.
    - a. Therefore, Augusta Health requires team members who have received the benefit to return the investment by continuing to work for Augusta Health.
    - b. For every amount up to \$1,250 a team member receives in tuition reimbursement, the team member is required to work one quarter (three months) in their current status, starting upon date of receipt of the money.
    - c. If a team member leaves the employment of Augusta Health for any reason prior to fulfilling this requirement, the team member is to refund the amount of tuition reimbursement received to Augusta Health.
    - d. All refunds due to Augusta Health are to be paid in full on or before the team member's last regular workday. Augusta Health may deduct from a team member's last paycheck to the extent permitted by law any sums owed by the team member to Augusta Health.

### **C. Leader Responsibilities**

1. Human Resources are to review and approve applications. The team member must meet eligibility, as outlined in this policy. Other considering factors are as follows:
  - a. Relevance of program to current job and/or other jobs of value to Augusta Health
  - b. The ability to balance staffing and work schedules with the requested class schedule
  - c. The organization's financial ability to pay (budget) and needs
2. The leader is to sign the Application for Tuition Reimbursement Benefit after reviewing and agreeing that all qualifications for this benefit are met by the team member.

**6. Related Policies and Documents**

- Educational Assistance Benefit Agreement
- Educational Assistance Application

**7. References**

- N/A

**8. Revision Notes**

Notes
10-27-21: Updated to new format.
1-27-22: Revised from Tuition Reimbursement Policy to Education Assistance Program