

Office of Court Administration

Training and Education Policy

Reviewed: November 7, 2008

Approved by: _____
Carl Reynolds

Office of Court Administration Training and Education Policy

General

OCA encourages the professional and personal development of its employees through the utilization of training and educational programs. Pursuant to Chapter 656 of the Government Code, appropriated funds may be used to provide training or education related to the duties or prospective duties of the employee following the training.

Applicability

The Training and Education policy and related procedures apply to OCA employees who are not directly or indirectly supervised by a presiding judge: those employees must obtain their presiding judge's approval.

Required Training

OCA may require employees to attend, as part of the employee's duties, a training or education program if the training or education is related to the employee's duties or prospective duties.

Discretionary Training

OCA may allow employees to attend discretionary training at the agency's expense. For purposes of this policy, discretionary training means instruction, teaching, or other education that is requested by an employee (rather than by the supervisor or director) and that is not normally received by other employees. It includes both out-of-agency staff development and college degree programs when tuition or expenses are paid for or reimbursed by OCA.

Purposes of Training

The purposes of OCA's training and educational programs include:

- Preparing for technological and legal developments
- Increasing work capabilities
- Increasing competence of OCA employees

Eligibility for Participation in Discretionary Training

All OCA headquarters employees are immediately eligible for participation in discretionary training when they begin their employment, provided they are a regular employee (i.e. not a temporary employee), and they are not on leave without pay status.

In addition, to be eligible for tuition reimbursement for a college degree program an employee must:

- be employed by OCA for a minimum of one year before the course begins
- have demonstrated satisfactory job performance
- not be in default of previous OCA educational program obligations; and
- have satisfactorily completed all course work for which tuition reimbursement is requested.

Course Work Criteria

OCA-reimbursed training and/or educational course work must be either directly work-related or serve to enhance the employee's knowledge or performance in his or her current or prospective duty assignment, and, for college degree programs, must be provided through an accredited school.

Costs Eligible for Reimbursement

Training and education costs which may be paid directly or reimbursed to the employee include: tuition, other required fees, travel expenses, books, and other training materials. The level of assistance to be provided will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and based on factors such as availability of funds, type of training, needs of the organization, employee development needs, etc.

Training Budgets

Based upon the availability of funds, each OCA division will be allocated a training budget for the fiscal year. For enrollment in a college degree program, the maximum amount of reimbursement an employee can receive is \$600.00 per fiscal year. This amount is prorated for part-time employees based on their percent employment. Division directors are delegated authority to manage their division budgets to meet the training needs of their respective areas.

Prior Division Director Approval Required

All requests to participate in any required or discretionary training program must be authorized by the appropriate division director (or by the administrative director in the case of a division director) before the employee enrolls.

Prior Approval Procedures for all OCA Paid or Reimbursed Training

For all OCA paid or reimbursed training, employees and supervisors must coordinate initial approval of a training request. The employee or supervisor will submit a request to approve the training activity to the appropriate division director. A completed OCA Purchase Requisition form must also be included with the request. If travel is required, a Request for Agency Travel and Staff Development form must also be completed. If the training is discretionary training for which OCA will pay \$1,500 or more, a Discretionary Training Agreement must also be completed. In addition, for college tuition reimbursements, the Request for Tuition Reimbursement must be approved before the employee enrolls. Upon approval, the division director will submit the signed purchase requisition form with any required attachments to the Finance Division (purchasing section). The Finance Director will determine availability of funds. Once the purchase

requisition is processed and assigned a purchase order number, the employee will be authorized to enroll in the approved training activity

Request for College Tuition Reimbursement

An employee desiring reimbursement for college tuition expenses must complete a ***Tuition Reimbursement Request*** form.

The employee must attach the following documents to the Tuition Reimbursement Request form:

1. Copy of the course description(s);
2. Copy of the degree plan;
3. Verification of the total rate charged by the college;
4. Completed OCA Purchase Requisition form;
5. Request for Agency Travel and Staff Development form (if applicable); and
6. Receipt from the college for tuition paid by the employee (if applicable).

The Request for Tuition Reimbursement form and attachments are processed in the same manner as the request and purchase requisition for all OCA reimbursed travel. In addition, a copy of the approved/disapproved Request for Tuition Reimbursement form will be forwarded to the employee and Human Resources Division for filing in the individual's personnel file.

Proof of Satisfactory Completion

Within six weeks of the completion of the training, the employee must submit proof of satisfactory course completion to his/her division director. The division director will submit these documents to the Finance Division and the Human Resources Division to be filed in the individual's personnel file. The employee's failure to submit the required documentation in a timely manner may cause OCA to deny reimbursement to the employee or to seek reimbursement from the employee.

Discretionary Training Agreement

Discretionary training for which expenses paid by OCA will be \$1,500 or more requires a Discretionary Training Agreement. Required training will never be subject to a Discretionary Training Agreement. The Agreement is a contract signed by the administrative director and the employee, in which the employee agrees to reimburse OCA a percentage of the costs of the discretionary training, **if the employee voluntarily leaves OCA within one year of course completion.**

The schedule is as follows;

- Voluntary separation before the four-month anniversary of the date of completion: repay 75% of the Costs.
- Voluntary separation after the four-month anniversary and before the eight-month anniversary of the date of completion: repay 50% of Costs.
- Voluntary separation after the eight-month and before the one year anniversary of the date of completion: repay 25% of costs.
- Voluntary separation after one year: No repayment obligation.

Exceptions to Repayment Obligation of Voluntary Training Agreement

The administrative director may grant exceptions to the payment of the pro rata reimbursement based upon the employee's situation. Examples of situations that may result in exceptions include: separation that is caused by circumstances beyond the employee's control such as illness or death of an immediate family member, or the unexpected relocation of a spouse. Exceptions may also be granted if separation is due to agency budgetary cutbacks, reductions in workforce, reorganizations, or for the convenience of the agency. Each situation will be considered on its own merits, and only the administrative director is authorized to grant exceptions to repayment.