



**COFFEE COUNTY GOVERNMENT**  
**EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT POLICY**  
**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH EMPLOYEES**

**Purpose:**

To establish approval criteria for the use of educational leave and to provide for tuition assistance for Associate, Bachelor, Master, and Doctoral degree and certificate programs for employees within the Department of Health. This policy is developed with federal funding that could be directed to workforce development. The policy allowances and amount of funding are expected to sunset with the known end of federal funding June 30, 2023. If an individual has not completed a degree or certification by that time, the employee will be responsible for the cost after June 30, 2023.

**Applicability: Department of Health Employees**

**Policy:** It shall be the policy of the Department of Health to provide opportunities for education and training designed to increase the quality of performance of employees in their duties and responsibilities as well as improve the quality of service to our citizens. The employee will commit in writing to at least one year of continued state service following the last paid or time supported semester of the program. This policy does not create a right. The Coffee County Health Department may suspend this program at any time. It is anticipated this program will be revised prior to July 2023 when additional federal funding will no longer be available. In the event of suspension of the program, current semester agreements will be honored.

Salary increases as a result of program completion are subject to funding availability within the employee's division. Potential salary increases should be discussed by the employee with the unit director prior to approval of the application.

**Approval Criteria:**

1. For employees requesting part-time educational leave/tuition assistance, the education supported must be applicable to the public health field. This may include pre-requisite courses.
2. Employees requesting part-time educational leave/tuition assistance either graduate or undergraduate, must have at least six months of state service, and no longer in a probationary status.
3. Employees requesting part-time educational leave/tuition assistance must have received acceptance to an accredited degree or certificate program.
4. Employees must have and must maintain at least a "valued" overall performance evaluation rating during the previous twelve (12) month period and during the period in which they are

enrolled in educational programs and/or using educational leave and/or receiving tuition assistance.

5. Employees must maintain at least a "B" average in each course during the time they are using educational leave and/or receiving tuition assistance.
6. Tuition assistance includes two courses leading to a degree plus up to 90% of the tuition for the degree, up to \$25,000 a year.
7. Tuition assistance in excess of \$5,250 per year will be subject to federal income taxes as prescribed by Internal Revenue Service (IRS) regulations and shall be added to the employee's regular tax withholding.
8. The assistance authorized under this policy is in addition to any education assistance program offered by the state to all employees.
9. A maximum of 7.5 hours/week leave time may be requested by the employee, and this must be reapproved by the supervisory chain and committee each semester.
10. Contract workers are not eligible for this benefit.

### **Procedures to Apply:**

1. Employees must complete an educational leave/tuition assistance application and obtain signatures from their supervisor and division/office/regional director (Appendix A)
2. Employees must submit a written one-time statement of 500 words or less addressing how part-time educational leave/tuition assistance would benefit their current position and the impact on their long-term career plans.
3. Employees must provide complete course of study/curriculum and degree requirements at time of application.
4. Employees must submit an educational leave/tuition assistance application to the Coffee County Personnel & Benefits Coordinator. Such applications shall be filed in accordance with the following deadlines:

**July 15<sup>th</sup>:** for the Fall Semester

**December 15<sup>th</sup>:** for the Spring Semester

**April 15<sup>th</sup>:** for Summer Semester

5. Initial review of all requests will be the responsibility of the Coffee County Personnel & Benefits Coordinator. The Coffee County Health Director will review each request and may consult with the employee's supervisor to confirm applicability to current position.
6. Final approval will be by the Coffee County Health Director. Employees will be notified by the Coffee County Health Director in writing of approval or denial of the request.
7. Employees approved for part-time educational leave/tuition assistance will be required to sign an education contract for continued employment with the Department of Health (Appendix A). Employees who are approved for part-time educational leave/tuition assistance will remain in the employment of the Department of Health for a minimum of twelve months (12) of continued state service following the last paid or time supported semester of the program.
8. Employees must provide supervisory chain approval for each semester requested but do not need to re-complete the entire application.

The Coffee County Educational Support Policy for Department of Health Employees, educational leave/tuition assistance application, and education contract will be posted on the Coffee County Personnel & Benefits page on the Coffee County Website at [www.coffeecountytn.gov](http://www.coffeecountytn.gov).

*Doug Cordell*

Coffee County Mayor

7/11/22

Date