

CLAY COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE
CLAY COUNTY, FLORIDA

GENERAL ORDER

NUMBER: GO 5300.0 (Previously 2110.2)
TITLE: College Financial Assistance
REVISED: 08/08/2014
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RESCINDS: 11/06/2013
REFERENCE:
DISTRIBUTION: All Members
RELATED DOCUMENTS:
CFA #: 3.01M
FCAC #: 2.03M

PURPOSE

The purpose of this directive is to establish uniform guidelines for all full-time members as it relates to their educational background and educational enhancement. This directive is intended to clarify the intent of the Sheriff's Office relating to the availability of funds for reimbursement covering the cost of tuition in return for successful completion of job-related and degree seeking course work. Furthermore, it will set forth the proper format one must follow to qualify for reimbursement.

This directive consists of the following numbered sections:

- I. General
- II. Educational Incentive Pay Program
- III. Colleges or Universities Eligible for Reimbursement Program
- IV. Forms of Financial Assistance
- V. Service Obligation
- VI. Exclusions
- VII. Duty Status
- VIII. Procedures

This directive will be reviewed and updated on an annual basis by the Finance Bureau Commander, or designee. The review will be documented on an Office Memorandum, to the Planning and Research Section, which will maintain a review log of the General Orders directives.

(CFA 3.01M)
(FCAC 2.03M)

I. GENERAL

- A. The achievement of a college degree will enhance the career opportunities and professional stature of Sheriff's Office members. Each member is strongly encouraged to pursue and achieve a college education from an accredited college or university. Sworn members are encouraged to obtain a minimum of a bachelor's degree.
- B. College course credit is available through a number of attainable methods such as the following:
 - 1. Credit from basic recruit classes
 - 2. Credit from technical courses
 - 3. Credit from completion of courses offered periodically at the Sheriff's Office or related agencies
 - 4. Credit from completion of courses offered at educational institutions, to include, but not limited to, St. Johns River State College, Florida State College at Jacksonville (formerly FCCJ), University of North Florida, Vincennes University, Barry University, Florida State University, University of Florida, Columbia College, etc.
 - 5. Credit for military time
 - 6. Credit for "Passing" CLEP or Dantes Examination system of receiving course credit by passing an examination prior to actual attendance in classes
 - 7. Credit for learning acquired through documented professional work experience and community activities
- C. There is no question that the Sheriff's Office and the general public derive benefit from members successfully completing college level courses. Despite their lack of direct relationship to policing (such as a required course within a Criminal Justice degree in the Sciences, Mathematics or Language Arts), one derives the benefit of personal growth, which will most assuredly affect their "on-the-job" performance in a positive manner.
- D. This statement is being formalized to bring conformity and direction to those members who desire to seek higher education through financial assistance provided by the Sheriff's Office. It is not our intent to limit members of the agency to only seeking degrees in Police Science, Criminal Justice, or Criminology.

- E.** It is not our intention to discourage attendance at private institutions of higher learning. On the contrary, many private colleges and universities are among the finest learning centers in our country. However, from the standpoint of the Sheriff's Office obtaining maximum benefit from a minimum amount of monies expended, it is incumbent upon us to encourage attendance at public colleges and universities from a purely financial standpoint. Those members desiring to attend private institutions are certainly encouraged to do so, as long as there is a willingness on the member's part to make up his portion of the financial responsibility. The private institution must have an accreditation status that is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education and FDLE.

II. EDUCATIONAL INCENTIVE PAY PROGRAM

- A.** Educational incentive pay is available for college degrees from regionally accredited colleges/universities and each member is encouraged to take advantage of this important benefit. The program is provided through Florida State Statute 943.22 to continue professional development. All full-time, certified deputies and detention deputies are eligible for salary incentive payments. Specific information is available through guidelines from the Florida Department of Law Enforcement and Human Resources (CCSO).
- B.** As of March 2007, sworn personnel who elect to use Commission-approved Advanced or Career Development Training Courses as credit toward a two or four year degree, for which the deputy would receive educational reimbursement, shall not receive advanced or career development salary incentive payment for those same courses. Human Resources shall review all educational transcripts submitted for educational salary incentive to ensure there is no duplication of payment. This is pursuant to Florida State Statute 943.22(2)(d) and Florida Administrative Code 11B-14.003(4).
- C.** The Sheriff's Office has created an Educational Incentive Program for full-time civilian members with college degrees. This program is similar to what sworn personnel are already eligible to receive through the Criminal Justice Standards and Training Commission (CJSTC) Educational Incentive Program. Civilian members with an associate's degree (A. A. or A. S.) from a regionally accredited college are eligible to receive \$30.00 per month in salary incentive monies paid on a bi-weekly basis. Those civilian members with a bachelor's degree (B. A. or B. S.) or other higher education from a regionally accredited college are eligible to receive \$80.00 per month paid on a bi-weekly basis in salary incentive monies. These salary incentive amounts are not meant to be combined and all official transcripts must be received and verified by Human Resources prior to the payment of any monies.

III. COLLEGES OR UNIVERSITIES ELIGIBLE FOR REIMBURSEMENT PROGRAM

- A. Pending the availability of funds, the Sheriff shall establish a budget amount each fiscal year for payment of tuition under this policy. Since a limited budget will be maintained for the College Financial Assistance Program, requests will be considered on a first-come, first-serve basis for the upcoming semester for courses that end within the fiscal year. Requests shall only be submitted one semester at a time. Reimbursement rates listed in this directive may be reduced at any time pending the availability of funds.
1. The reimbursement rate beginning in FY 2014-2015 for all undergraduate collegiate level courses will be offered at 90% of the "state rate", less any grants or assistance received.
 2. When attending graduate courses in pursuit of a Master's Degree, the rate of reimbursement will be at 50% of the prevailing rate of the University of North Florida, less any grants or assistance received.
- B. Information regarding state rates prevailing at the time of enrollment will be available from Human Resources. The following institutions are acceptable (but not limited to) at the levels noted.
1. Associate in Arts (A. A.) or Associate in Science (A. S.):
 - a. Florida State College at Jacksonville
 - b. St. Johns River State College (prevailing rate)
 - c. Vincennes University
 - d. Santa Fe State College
 2. Bachelor of Arts (B. A.) or Bachelor of Science (B. S.) or Bachelor of Public Administration (B.P.A.)
 - a. Barry University
 - b. Columbia College
 - c. Flagler College
 - d. University of North Florida (prevailing rate)

3. Master of Science (M. S.) or Master of Arts (M. A.) or Master of Public Administration (M. P. A)
 - a. Barry University
 - b. Columbia College
 - c. University of North Florida (prevailing rate)
 - d. Webster University

NOTE: All of the above are area colleges easily accessible to our members. Although other colleges exist that would qualify for reimbursement, such as Florida State University and the University of Florida, these listed simply are the most accessible to meet our scheduling needs.

IV. FORMS OF FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

It is the intent of the Sheriff's Office to provide financial assistance to as many members as possible, therefore only tuition is reimbursed. Other fees such as, but not limited to, initial applications fees, transcribing, portfolio fees, lab fees, audit courses (CLEP, APL), books, graduation fees and other non-tuition fees are not covered under the College Financial Assistance Program. Additionally it will be the member's responsibility to obtain their own transportation, at their own expense.

V. SERVICE OBLIGATION

Members who request college financial assistance must agree to remain in the employment of the Clay County Sheriff's Office for at least two (2) years after receiving reimbursement under this policy. Members who resign employment or are terminated for cause while involved with the College Financial Assistance Program, shall be obligated to the Sheriff's Office, for the total amount paid by the Sheriff's Office toward any college courses. Reimbursement shall be payment by cash or personal check or deduction from any monies due at the time of separation. Members may also establish a payroll deduction for reimbursement by contacting the Fiscal Director as soon as a separation date is known.

VI. EXCLUSIONS

- A. In order to be eligible to participate in the College Financial Assistance Program, members must have completed **one (1) year** of continuous full-time employment with the Clay County Sheriff's Office and maintain a meets and/or exceeds performance evaluation.
- B. The following agency members may not be eligible for reimbursement under this program:

1. Members who are awarded scholarship tuition monies from other sources may not be eligible. This includes military members who receive tuition monies from the government. Each case will be reviewed on an individual basis to determine whether or not the scholarship is "full" or "partial." In either event, it is our intent to avoid individuals being reimbursed twice for the same course work. This program is meant to be a financial aid to persons who otherwise could not participate.
2. Scholarships, grants, or awards for expenses other than tuition are permissible (i.e. unrestricted cash awards).
3. It will be the responsibility of the member to avoid double reimbursement. Members found to have received double reimbursement may be subject to disciplinary action up to/and including criminal prosecution.

VII. DUTY STATUS

For the purpose of salary/payroll concerns, voluntary attendance in college is "off-duty" rather than "on-duty." Therefore, hours spent in college classrooms (whether you are reimbursed via this procedure or not), are not "hours worked" for payroll or time sheet purposes.

VIII. PROCEDURES

- A. To apply for college financial assistance, the member must contact the Human Resources Director by memorandum, via chain of command, and provide the following:
 1. For approval, a copy of the degree program or course curriculum the member is registered in and working towards. All majors must be preapproved in order to be eligible for reimbursement and be directly related to the functions of the Sheriff's Office. This must be submitted either prior to the start of the initial program/course or as an attachment with item #2 (below.)
 2. Once a degree or course curriculum, is approved, a completed "Request for Training/College" form (CCSO/F008) for each college class the member is registered in. Should a course be unavailable and a substitute course becomes necessary, the member will notify the Human Resources Director via memorandum or email of this substitution.
 3. At the completion of each course, the member must provide the completed CCSO/F020 (Educational Reimbursement Request) along with proof of payment and grade report. These documents must be provided no later than thirty (30) calendar days following the end of the course, otherwise reimbursement payment will be denied.

4. The member must receive at least a grade of 2.0 or the equivalent of at least a grade of C, to be eligible for reimbursement.
 5. Pending availability of funds, members will be limited to reimbursement payment for two (2) college level courses per semester/quarter, unless the member is receiving Florida Residence Access Grant (FRAG) from Barry University and Flagler College.
 6. A member receiving tuition assistance will promptly notify Human Resources by memo, via chain of command, of any change in course curriculum or degree being earned. Prior approval of changes is required for a member to remain eligible for reimbursement under the College Financial Assistance Program.
- B. Arrangements are sometimes made between the member and the college or university to defer payments on courses until part or all of the course is completed. These arrangements are strictly between the member and the educational institution. However, members who do not pay for the courses, as agreed, will not be permitted to participate in the Sheriff's Office College Financial Assistance Program until the balance of any money owed is paid in full.
- C. Questions concerning this directive or its application should be directed to the Human Resources Section.



Sheriff Rick Beseler