

UPMC

Subject: Tuition Assistance Program for Dependents of Staff Members

Date: 11/1/15

I PROGRAM

UPMC provides an educational assistance benefit to dependent children, spouses, and domestic partners of eligible UPMC staff members to pursue further education and training. UPMC is committed to excellence in patient care, research, and education. Through this benefit, UPMC is helping to educate tomorrow's workforce and retain top-flight talent in our region, enriching our staff, their families, and our communities.

II ELIGIBILITY

A. Eligible Staff Members

1. Job Status

- (a) Eligible staff members include active UPMC employees classified as regular full-time, flex full-time, job share, and regular part-time.
- (b) Physicians and staff members covered by a collective bargaining agreement must refer to the terms of their contract for eligibility. Groups not eligible for the UPMC Dependent Tuition Assistance benefit include, but are not limited to, staff at: Carrillo Steam Plant, Ladies Hospital Aid Society, UPP faculty and staff dually employed with UPMC and the University of Pittsburgh, and UPMC Mercy religious staff.
- (c) Staff members are eligible after one year of service provided the school term begins on or after the eligibility date. Time spent as full-time, flex-full time, job-share, regular part-time, limited part-time, and casual is counted as service time. Temporary status does not count toward the one year eligibility requirement.
- (d) In the event of position elimination, tuition assistance will be granted for courses that have already begun for the semester during which employment termination occurs and when all other requirements of these guidelines have been met.

2. Mid-Semester Internal Job Transfers

Staff members who transfer internally during the school term may be eligible for tuition assistance for that current term. Eligible courses must begin prior to the effective date of transfer. The assistance level is determined by the job status at the start of the term.

- (a) Eligible mid-semester transfers include transfers:
 - from a business unit covered under these guidelines to a business unit not covered, or
 - from an eligible full-time job status (e.g. regular full-time, flex full-time) to an eligible part-time job status (e.g. regular part-time, job share) or vice versa.
- (b) Ineligible mid-semester transfers include transfers:
 - from a business unit not covered under these guidelines to a business unit covered, or
 - from an eligible job status (e.g. regular full-time, flex full-time, regular part-time, job share) to an ineligible job status (e.g. limited part-time, casual, temporary, terminated).

B. Eligible Dependents

1. Definitions

Use of the term “dependent” in this document refers to all eligible dependents as defined below except where necessary to specifically refer to one or more types of dependents (such as spouse/domestic partner). The definition of an eligible dependent for tuition purposes is not the same as the definition of an eligible dependent for other UPMC benefits.

(a) **Spouse**

The individual to whom the staff member is legally married through a governmental or religious ceremony. A common-law spouse is recognized with an approved common law affidavit on file with UPMC documenting the relationship prior to Sept. 17, 2003.

(b) **Domestic Partner**

The individual designated by the staff member as a domestic partner by having a completed and approved Affidavit of Domestic Partnership on file with the UPMC Employee Service Center. (Due to the Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services, the definition of eligible dependents for UPMC Mercy staff does not include domestic partners.)

(c) **Dependent Child**

A dependent biological child, stepchild, legally adopted child, child placed with the staff member for adoption, approved domestic partner’s child, authorized foster child, or child for whom the staff member is a legal guardian provided the child is:

- unmarried; and
- under age 25; and
- primarily dependent on the staff member for support.

2. If a staff member’s dependent has a change in dependent child, spouse, or domestic partner status during the school term, tuition assistance is based on the dependent’s status at the beginning of the term.
3. If UPMC employs both the employee and spouse/domestic partner and both staff members are in a benefit eligible classification, the spouse/domestic partner tuition benefit does not apply. The employees are covered separately under the Tuition Assistance for Staff Members program. The dependent child benefit is eligible under only one staff member (the benefit cannot be doubled).
4. Documentation to verify dependency is required prior to initial claim. Staff must provide a marriage certificate for a spouse or obtain an approved UPMC Domestic Partner Affidavit for a domestic partner adult or child. Children must meet the tuition definition of an eligible dependent child. Documentation is required for any child who is not your biological child, stepchild, or legally adopted child.

III TOTAL CREDIT LIMIT

- A. Dependents are eligible for tuition assistance on a maximum of up to 150 credit hours.

IV DEPENDENT STUDENT STATUS

- A. Spouses/domestic partners can be full-time or part-time students.
- B. Dependent children must be full-time students throughout the term (generally a minimum of 12 credit hours).

1. If an otherwise eligible full-time student becomes disabled due to a physical or medical condition, such that full-time student status can no longer be maintained, coverage may be extended on a limited basis until such time that the student is able to return to full-time student status, provided that no less than nine (9) credits are maintained per semester during this extension and a physician attests that full-time student status can not be maintained due to the physical or medical condition. In no circumstances will this extension of coverage be continued beyond the attainment of age 25.
 2. Dependent children who register for and/or begin 12 or more credits at the start of the term and do not complete at least 12 credits during the term are not considered to meet the full-time student requirement.
- C. Dependent children can utilize the benefit in the summer semester provided they were enrolled as a full time college student the prior semester (spring).

V EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

- A. The benefit is limited to the schools, majors, and maximum degree levels listed below. All courses are subject to review for appropriateness.
- B. Tuition assistance benefits are limited to students attending the University of Pittsburgh, a community college, or a vocational/technical school. Any other institution is not eligible. Community colleges or vocational/technical schools must be accredited or recognized by the United States Department of Education.
- C. Dependents attending the University of Pittsburgh, a community college, or a UPMC proprietary school may pursue any major course of study. Dependents attending vocational/technical schools may only pursue a healthcare related major as defined in attached listing found in the appendix.
- D. Dependent must be pursuing a post secondary/post high school program up to their first bachelor's degree.
 1. Eligible programs include:
 - Certificate program, associate's, and bachelor's degree programs
 - correspondence courses, external degree programs, independent study courses, and on-line, and distance learning
 - College Level Examination Program (CLEP) exams and challenge exams are eligible if credit is received for courses approved according to these guidelines.
 2. Ineligible programs include but are not limited to:
 - second bachelor's degree
 - master's or doctorate degree programs
 - college entrance exams
 - initial and periodic renewal of licenses
 - certification review courses and exams
 - continuing education seminars, professional development units, and conferences
 - College in High School (CHS) courses
 - audited courses

VI TUITION ASSISTANCE AMOUNT

- A. Tuition assistance is provided as a percentage of the student's actual out-of-pocket tuition cost up to an academic year maximum. The assistance benefit is based on the student's relationship to the staff member and the staff member's job status (see chart below). The academic year is the 12 month period August 1 through July 31. Generally it starts with the fall semester, continues through the spring semester, and finishes with the summer semester. The start date of a class determines its academic year.

Student	Full-time and Flex-Full time Staff		Regular Part-time and Job-share Staff	
	Percentage of Tuition	Academic Year Maximum	Percentage of Tuition	Academic Year Maximum
Spouse/Domestic Partner	50%	\$2,000	50%	\$1,000
Dependent Child	50%	\$6,000	50%	\$3,000

- B. The tuition assistance benefit is limited to the actual out-of-pocket tuition costs only and does not cover any other fees associated with taking classes, such as technology fees, administrative fees, books, room and board, supplies, etc.
- C. Any non-repayable tuition assistance received from third party sources (e.g. grants, scholarships, and tuition assistance through a spouse's employer) offsets the tuition assistance provided by UPMC. It is the staff member's responsibility to report non-repayable amounts received to the Employee Service Center. Repayable tuition assistance (e.g. loans) is not factored into tuition assistance received. Any eligible tuition discounts are applied before the reimbursement percentage.

VII SUCCESSFUL COURSE COMPLETION

- A. Tuition assistance will be provided only for courses completed with a grade of "C" or better.
- B. "P" or "S" grade for courses taken on a pass-fail basis is considered the equivalent of a "C" grade.

VIII TUITION REIMBURSEMENT

With tuition reimbursement, staff members pay for classes directly to their dependent's school at the beginning of the semester and then request reimbursement of eligible out-of-pocket tuition expenses from UPMC after the completion of the term. Tuition assistance for dependents is offered only on a reimbursement basis.

- A. Reimbursement is available only for schools and courses eligible under these guidelines.
- B. Application procedure:
1. At the end of each term, print a new Dependent Tuition Assistance Request Form from the UPMC Infonet at <http://infonet.upmc.com/tuition>.
 2. The completed Tuition Assistance Request Form, an itemized invoice, proof of payment, proof of successful completion (grade report), and proof of dependent status (if not previously provided) must be submitted no later than 6 months after the class end date. Documentation must include the student's pre-printed name, school, and term.

3. Once the reimbursement is approved, a notification letter is mailed to the staff member.
4. Reimbursement amounts are included in the staff member's regularly scheduled pay approximately 4 - 6 weeks after the Employee Service Center receives all the necessary documentation. Appropriate taxes are deducted from the reimbursement (currently includes federal, state and local).
5. Reimbursement will be provided for courses completed successfully. In cases where a course is not completed successfully (e.g. below a "C" grade, incomplete, withdrawal), the eligible benefit amount is calculated based on the percentage of credits completed successfully in relation to the total credits taken in that term.

IX PRE-ELIGIBILITY VERIFICATION

- A. Staff members who want to obtain general verification of eligibility prior to the start of a term may print a Tuition Assistance Eligibility Verification Form from the UPMC Infonet at <http://infonet.upmc.com/tuition> and submit it to the UPMC Employee Service Center. The form will be reviewed and a response concerning the eligibility will be mailed to the staff member within four weeks.
- B. Verification is based on the staff member's self-reported information and is not a guarantee of payment. A review of the actual documentation and specific information of the actual reimbursement submission will determine exact eligible payment amounts as additional criteria are reviewed at that time including: dependent status, successful completion, available maximum, employee's job status, timely submission, proof of payment, and non-repayable third party payments.
- C. Completion of a Tuition Assistance Eligibility Verification Form is not required to qualify for the tuition assistance benefit.

X EMPLOYMENT COMMITMENT

Staff members receiving dependent tuition assistance are expected to remain in a tuition eligible employment status for 12 months following the completion of the course in which tuition assistance was provided. Staff who do not remain in an eligible status are required to repay any disqualified tuition assistance received.

- A. An ineligible employment status occurs when:
 - employment terminates (with the exception of position elimination, reduction in force, divestiture, disability, or Graduate Medical Education Residents or Fellows), or
 - job status changes to limited part-time, casual, or temporary
- B. At the time of ineligibility, repayment is required for all courses completed within the 12 months prior to the date of ineligibility.
- C. Repayment will be deducted from the staff member's pay (including vested paid time off payout) and any remaining balance must be paid directly to UPMC. The terminating staff member should contact the UPMC Employee Service Center to arrange for repayment.
- D. If a staff member repays tuition assistance, and returns to an eligible employment status within one year, the repayment amount is refunded to the staff member. The refund occurs after the staff member remains in an eligible employment status for a period of time equal to the balance of time needed to meet the 12 month employment commitment prior to termination (minimum of 90 days). The staff member must notify the UPMC Employee Service Center when they have met this requirement.

XI OTHER

- A. Admission decisions are the sole responsibility of the University of Pittsburgh, community colleges, and technical schools. Eligibility to receive the tuition benefit does not guarantee admission.
- B. Staff members must be actively employed and meet all other eligibility criteria for the duration of the term to qualify for tuition assistance for their dependent. There may be some exceptions under the enhanced military leave benefit, see HS-HR0712 Military Leave of Absence.
- C. In the event that these guidelines are inconsistent with the provisions of a collective bargaining agreement, the collective bargaining agreement provisions apply.
- D. General information on other financial aid opportunities and tuition deferral programs at educational institutions is available from the Employee Assistance Program staff via UPMC DirectLink at 1-800-994-2752, option 6, or in the Employee Assistance Program section of UPMC Infonet and directly from the student's school.
- E. Staff members who transfer from the University of Pittsburgh and the Veteran's Affairs Medical Center (Oakland) are eligible for tuition assistance, provided their adjusted service dates precede the date of their enrollment in an educational program or course. (See Transfer of Prior Service Credit Policy for a list of those organizations.)
- F. Tuition cases where credit hours are not utilized by a school, 15 hours of instruction is equivalent to one credit.
- G. The Plan may recover from you any excess amount reimbursed to you or advanced on your behalf. Future benefits will be paid according to the tuition guidelines, and may be offset by prior overpayment. If you are unsure of your eligible tuition amount, you should contact the UPMC Employee Service Center for verification.
- H. Questions about the UPMC Tuition Assistance benefit should be directed to the UPMC Employee Service Center at 1-800-994-2752, option 3.

XII APPEAL PROCESS

The Employee Service Center has the initial authority to determine whether an individual is eligible to participate and the amount of benefits that are payable. Even though it does not happen often, occasionally questions arise. If a staff member does not agree with a benefit eligibility or assistance amount determination, the staff member should contact the UPMC Employee Service Center to discuss. In most cases, issues are resolved quickly by the Employee Service Center. However, if the staff member still feels the issue is unresolved, there is a written appeal process in place. Refer to the Appeals section of the UPMC Welfare Summary Plan Description for details to submit a written appeal.

APPENDIX

List of Approved Health-Related Programs For Technical/Vocational Schools

- Blood Bank Technology/Technician
- Cardiovascular Technology/Technician
- Diagnostic Medical Sonography
- Dialysis Technology
- Electrocardiograph Technology/Tech
- Emergency Medical/Paramedic
- Health Care Technician
- Health Information Technology
- Health Prof. & Related Sciences
- Home Health Aide
- Massage Therapy
- Medical Assistant
- Medical Claims Processing
- Medical Coding
- Medical Lab Technician
- Medical Nutrition/Medical Terminology
- Medical Office Management
- Medical Physiology
- Medical Records Technology
- Medical Secretary
- Medical Transcriptionist
- Nuclear Medicine Technology
- Nurse
- Nurses Aide
- Nursing Assistant
- Occupational Safety & Health Technology/Technician
- Occupational Therapy Assistant
- Opticianry/Dispensing Optician
- Orthotics/Prosthetics
- Patient Information Coordinator
- Pharmacy Technician
- Phlebotomy
- Physical Therapist Assistant
- Practical Nursing
- Radiation Therapy Technology
- Radiologic Technologist
- Radiology Department Technology
- Respiratory Therapist
- Respiratory Therapy Technician
- Surgical/Operating Room Technician