I. PURPOSE:

This document describes the policies and procedures regarding eligibility for and access to benefits under the Educational Assistance Plan. This policy is intended to provide a description of recommended courses of action. It is recognized that there may be specific circumstances not contemplated by this document that will require additional interpretations and guidance.

When a provision in this document differs from a union contract, the contract shall take precedence.

II. POLICY:

Stanford Hospital & Clinics (SHC) is committed to supporting staff development and fostering a climate that encourages learning. This policy is designed to accomplish that objective by encouraging employees to maintain and improve skills and knowledge used in their present positions and assisting them with job-related development.

III. PRINCIPLES:

Regular and Fixed-Term employees who work 40 hours or more per pay period and have completed the trial period are eligible for the Educational Assistance Plan. Temporary and Relief employees and employees on leave of absence are not eligible. Eligible status must be maintained throughout the entire course or assistance will not be granted.

As an exception an individual who started an approved class prior to a leave of absence is eligible to receive reimbursement for that class when they return from leave to a benefit-eligible position. Request for reimbursement must be received within 90 days from the date employee returns from leave. Any reimbursement request for expenses during a leave received after November 30th of the Calendar Year will be applied to the next Fiscal Year benefit.

External and internal courses not pre-approved for transfer of funds must be submitted within 90 days after successful completion of the course/purchase with acceptable documentation. Exceptions require the approval of the Vice President of Human Resources or designee.

IV. PROCEDURE:
This policy applies to:  
☑ Stanford Hospital & Clinics

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Name of Policy:  
Educational Assistance

Departments Affected:  
All Departments

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A. Maximum Benefits

The maximum reimbursement is $2,000 per fiscal year (September 1 - August 31) for eligible full-time employees (80 hours per pay period), with pro-rated amounts of that maximum, based on scheduled hours, for eligible part-time employees. This means the course must be completed by the end of the fiscal year for reimbursement. A change in the employee’s FTE during the fiscal year will not change the maximum funds for which the employee is eligible. However, transfers to a relief position will terminate this benefit and any courses in progress will not be reimbursed. Reimbursement for degree programs is limited to two (2) courses per academic term (semester or quarter), or six (6) units, whichever is greater.

B. Covered Expenses (requires appropriate receipts or documentation)

- Tuition costs, seminar fees, lab fees, textbooks required for a course (or CDs/media in lieu of textbooks)
- Prep materials (in place of taking a course)
- Certification exam/renewals
- Work-related conferences
- Prep exams required for certification
- Memberships (if required for a course/conference or is cost effective when taking multiple courses)
- Local travel (within the state of California) in excess of daily commute mileage
- Lodging when location is 50 miles or more than your daily commute (food, rental car, and parking included)
- Travel that is not local must be limited to the continental United States, authorized in advance by the Vice President of the department and should only be for travel to a class or conference that is not available locally
- Fees for high school equivalency tests
- Fees for exams in lieu of coursework that are part of an approved degree program

C. Expenses Not Covered

Expenses not covered include, but are not limited to, uniforms, equipment (such as stethoscopes), subscriptions, journals, reference books and other CDs/media that are not required by a course. Also excluded are fees for licensure, professional memberships not required for a course/conference, entrance exams and preparation classes for entrance exams.

D. Program/Course Qualifications
1. All courses and degree programs must relate to approved employee goals and development plans or departmental goals as determined by the employee’s supervisor and department head. All courses and programs must meet at least one of the following criteria:

   a. Related to Present Position - Courses, seminars or degree programs determined by the organization to be relevant to maintaining or improving knowledge/skills for performance in the current job.

   b. Career Development - Courses, seminars or degree programs related to knowledge/skills necessary to fulfill an identified and approved objective for promotion/transfer within the organization or to respond to an organizational or operational need.

   c. Health Education - Internally sponsored courses that are designed to educate staff on methods of preventing or alleviating special health problems. Also included are courses approved by your manager and sponsored by Stanford University. Physical fitness and exercise programs are not covered.

   d. High School Completion - Courses leading to a high school diploma or completion of the General Education Development (GED) exam.

2. A manager’s evaluation of courses should consider cost, quality, length, and timing. Internal courses are preferred however, external courses may be considered if it is the best interest of the hospital. As much as possible, employees should be encouraged to attend classes/conferences locally if one can be found that meets the educational need.

3. Should a question arise as to interpretation of the criteria, a rationale should be presented in writing to the employee’s department head and/or vice president, whose decision will be final.

E. Approval Process

1. Employee Responsibility - Prior Approval

   The employee must request prior approval from her/his manager prior to beginning the course. If prior approval has not been obtained, reimbursement may not be allowed.

2. Manager Responsibility – Prior Approval
The manager is responsible for ensuring that the employee is eligible for this benefit in advance of approving the request and at the time of reimbursement; the reimbursement requested will not exceed the maximum fiscal year allotment for the employee; and the course meets the objectives of this plan. Approval is at the discretion of the employee’s manager and nothing in this policy shall limit the department’s denial of this benefit based on staffing and operational needs. Managers must ensure that an employee’s request for time off to attend class(s) will not adversely affect staffing or operational needs.

F. Internal Courses

Some internal courses have been pre-approved for Transfer of Funds. For those courses, the employee sends the approved Educational Assistance Transfer of Funds for Internal Course Form to the appropriate course provider as listed in Step 3 on the form. No payment is required. However, Payroll will debit the employee’s account of funds available for the fiscal year. If the internal course has not been approved for transfer of funds, the employee will pay for the course and request reimbursement after course completion.

G. Requesting Reimbursement after Course Completion

1. External Courses and Internal Courses not Pre-approved for Transfer of Funds

   a. The employee must submit the required documentation listed below within ninety days of course completion to be reimbursed.

   Please refer to the Related Documents at the end of this policy to access details on eligibility, covered expenses, acceptable documents, Quick Guides, and reimbursement process.

   (1) The completed Tuition Reimbursement Online Form.

   (2) Evidence of payment e.g., receipt(s), canceled check(s), or photocopy of bank statement(s).

   (3) Proof of course completion (with grade of C or higher for degree programs for graded courses).
b. For employees reaching termination date, all reimbursements need to be approved and submitted before the employee’s termination date. Once the employee is terminated, the education assistance balance will be terminated. Please refer to the Termination Policy for education assistance after a layoff.

H. Taxability

The Educational Assistance program is intended to be an educational assistance program under Internal Revenue Code section 127. To the extent possible, benefits under the Educational Assistance Plan are intended to be tax-exempt under Internal Revenue Code sections 127 or (if applicable) as a “working condition fringe benefit” under Section 132 of the Code. Most courses are not taxable according to current IRS regulations. If a course or any related fees or expenses are determined to be taxable, based on the information provided on the application, the tuition reimbursement will be reduced by the applicable taxes.

I. Monitoring Tuition Account Balances

Departments are responsible for tracking usage to ensure that employees do not exceed the maximum yearly funds available based on the eligibility requirements described above. Internal courses paid for by Transfer of Funds are to be included in the calculation.

J. Release Time for Classes

1. If the organization requires an employee to attend a particular course, the hours spent in the class shall be considered time worked and the employee shall be compensated accordingly.

2. Voluntary attendance at classes is normally on the employee’s own time. An employee wishing to attend a class being held during his/her normally scheduled working hours may request a schedule change or approved time off without pay or with PTO. Managers have full discretion to approve or deny requests for time off based on staffing and operational needs.

V. RELATED DOCUMENTS:

A. Tuition Reimbursement Eligibility, Covered Expenses and Process:
   http://portal.stanfordmed.org/depts/HR/Pages/educational-assistance.aspx
VI. DOCUMENT INFORMATION:

A. Author/Original Date
   April 1998 by Felix Barthelemy, Vice President of Human Resources

B. Gatekeeper of Original Document
   Stanford Hospital & Clinics Human Resources Compliance Officer

C. Distribution and Training Requirements
   1. This policy resides on the Intranet of the hospital.
   2. New versions of the policy will be posted on the Intranet and communicated to applicable staff.

D. Review and Renewal Requirements
   This policy will be reviewed every three (3) years and/or as required by change of law or practice.

E. Review and Revision History
   October 1998 by C. A. Bergman, Project Manager
   July 2000 by C. A. Bergman, Project Manager
   October 2003 by T. Davis, Director of Human Resources
   June 2007 by L. Quintel, Director of Employee and Labor Relations
   February 2009 by G. Souza, Vice President of Human Resources – LPCH
   January 2010 by M. Pellarin, Director of Human Resources
   January 2011 by L. Johnson, Manager of HR Business Center
   September 2011 by L. Johnson, Manager of HR Business Center
   December 2012, Create Separate Policies for SHC and LPCH
   November 2013 by M. Wedell, Manager of Training & Organizational Development

F. Approvals
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July 2000 by F. Barthelemy, Vice President of Human Resources
October 2003 by C. Johnson, Vice President of Human Resources
June 2007 by Lori Curry, Vice President of Human Resources – SHC
June 2007 by Greg Souza, Vice President of Human Resources – LPCH
March 2009 by the Human Resources Policy Committee – SHC/LPCH
February 2010 by the Human Resources Policy Committee – SHC/LPCH
April 2011 by the Human Resources Policy Committee – SHC/LPCH
June 2011 by the Human Resources Steering Committee – SHC/LPCH
October 2011 by L. Quintel, Director of Employee and Labor Relations
December 2013 by G. Souza, Interim Vice President Human Resources

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