

Policy: College Tuition Reimbursement Program

Originator: Human Resources

Policy Number	Effective Date	Revision Date		
200.01	January 1, 2015	n/a		

**Purpose:** This policy establishes guidelines for employees seeking reimbursement for the cost of taking college courses that either helps them become more proficient in their existing positions at MIEMSS or prepares them for future opportunities within the agency.

### 1. Policy

MIEMSS recognizes the challenging requirements of the employees' duties and responsibilities in the workplace and understands and encourages its employees to engage in professional development. Accordingly, the agency offers a College Tuition Reimbursement Program (herein referred to as Program) to encourage its employees to become more proficient in their current position and to prepare for future opportunities and responsibilities within MIEMSS. The Program provides tuition reimbursement for qualified college courses.

#### 2. Scope

- a. This Program applies to:
  - i. courses taken at accredited schools, universities, or colleges, including online courses, whether or not taken as part of a degree program;
  - ii. courses taken for a grade or pass/fail result.
- b. The Program does not apply to:
  - i. seminars, conventions, or conferences;
  - ii. audited courses;
  - iii. review courses;
  - iv. professional certifications;
  - v. training that maintains the employee's skill level in their current career or occupation, i.e., continuing professional education.
- c. The ability of MIEMSS to offer a College Tuition Reimbursement Program is dependent on MIEMSS's ability to obtain budgeted funds each year from the General Assembly. In any fiscal year where funds are obtained for tuition reimbursement, the Agency will offer that money to employees through the Program. In any fiscal year where funds are unavailable, the agency may be unable to offer the Program for that year. Therefore, it is incumbent upon the employee to notify his/her immediate supervisor of his/her intention to request tuition reimbursement well in advance of the actual course start date so that sufficient funds may be allocated in the agency's budget. Failure to provide adequate advanced notice of the employee's intention to request tuition reimbursement could result in insufficient funding and denial of a reimbursement request.

#### 3. Eligibility

a. All regular full-time employees are eligible to participate in the Program. An employee must be in a budgeted position (PIN) and have completed their initial 6-month probationary period satisfactorily to be eligible for the Program. Contractual and other temporary employees are not eligible to participate in the Program. Note: An employee



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who is not required under law to serve an initial probationary period must have completed at least six (6) months of State service with the agency to be eligible.

b. An employee must have received a Satisfactory evaluation or better on his/her last midcycle or end-of-cycle performance appraisal prior to requesting approval for tuition reimbursement.

#### 4. Tuition Reimbursement Program Guidelines

a. The Department of Budget & Management (DBM) limits allowable reimbursement to the cost per credit of tuition in the University of Maryland System, regardless of the school that the employee chooses to attend, the number of credits per course or the number of courses taken in the case of full-time tuition. DBM publishes the allowable rates in July of each year. MIEMSS may not approve more than the per credit amount, but may approve a lesser amount or deny tuition reimbursement altogether, depending on the amount of budgeted funds set aside for the Program and the demand for tuition reimbursement.

If the course of study is not based on three (3) credits per course, then the maximum tuition reimbursement for that course will be based upon the equivalent of a three (3) credit course at the allowable State per credit rate. The maximum allowable tuition reimbursement shall be based upon the comparable hours normally required of a three-credit college or university undergraduate course (or graduate course if the course of study is at the graduate level).

- b. The only expense eligible for tuition reimbursement is the actual tuition cost. Expenses ineligible for tuition reimbursement include, but are not limited to, application, registration and student activities fees, enrollment fees, certification exam fees, the cost of books, and other fees directly related to a grade or pass/fail result (e.g., laboratory fees), fines, late fees, parking and any other fee not directly related to a grade or pass/fail result.
- c. Employees may receive tuition reimbursement for no more than the equivalent of two (2) courses in a single semester and no more than the equivalent of 18 credits in a fiscal year.
- d. Tuition reimbursement will only be given in cases where the employee earns a grade of C or better in an undergraduate course or a B or better in a graduate course, except for those graduate professional schools, such as law school, that accept a grade of C as satisfactory completion of a course. Courses taken for a pass/fail result must receive a passing grade.
- e. Tuition reimbursement will only be given for courses that will significantly improve the skill or knowledge of the employee in the performance of his/her current position, or prepare the employee for advancement to another position within MIEMSS. Continuing professional education that maintains the employee's skill level in his/her current position is not included in this policy.



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- f. Tuition reimbursement will not be given in cases where scholarships, grants or other financial assistance cover the cost of eligible expenses. Tuition reimbursement will only be allowed in cases where it offsets the employee's actual out-of-pocket costs for eligible expenses.
- g. An employee who received approval for the College Tuition Reimbursement Program but whose employment with MIEMSS is terminated prior to completion of the course will not be entitled to tuition reimbursement. If the employee terminates employment after the course is completed but prior to receiving tuition reimbursement, the amount of the tuition reimbursement, if any, will be prorated based upon the Obligated Service Agreement.
- h. As a general rule, employees will not be given work-release time to attend classes during the employee's normal work schedule. Employees must arrange to attend classes outside of their normal work schedule. With the Executive Director's approval, work-release time may be granted for an employee to attend a class, but only in extenuating circumstances.
- Employees who request to be a part of the College Tuition Reimbursement Program must complete an Obligated Service Agreement at the time of application. The Agreement states that, beginning on the first day of the month following the completion of the course, the employee must continue to work for MIEMSS for an additional six (6) months for each equivalent course for which the employee received tuition reimbursement. If the employee receives tuition reimbursement for the maximum equivalent two (2) courses, the employee is obligated to continue to work for the Agency for an additional twelve (12) months. If the employee receives tuition reimbursement for consecutive semesters, the total obligation for continued employment with MIEMSS equals the obligation for the current semester plus any obligation remaining from the prior semesters. For example, if at the end of the first semester (12/31/XX), the employee receives tuition reimbursement for two courses, the employee's employment obligation is twelve (12) months. If at the end of a second consecutive semester (5/31/XX), the employee receives tuition reimbursement for two additional courses, the total employment obligation equals nineteen (19) months (12 months for the first semester plus 12 months for the second semester less the 5 months worked during the second semester).

An employee who fails to fulfill their Obligated Service Agreement will be required to repay the tuition reimbursement to MIEMSS on a prorated basis. For example, if the employee's employment obligation is twelve (12) months but the employee only works six (6) of those months, the employee must repay the Agency one-half or 50% of the tuition reimbursement. Failure of an employee to repay the tuition reimbursement to MIEMSS may result in a deduction of the debt from the employee's paycheck or other legal recourse (e.g., referral to the State's Central Collection Unit).



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### 5. Procedure for requesting Tuition Reimbursement

- a. The employee must complete a Tuition Reimbursement Program Request form, an Obligated Service Agreement and an Application for Out-Service Training Authorization. These forms can be obtained from the MIEMSS Chief Administrative Officer and are also available online. Once completed, the forms, along with an attached description of the course(s) must be submitted to the employee's supervisor at least 30 calendar days before the start of the course for which tuition reimbursement is requested.
- b. The employee's supervisor will review the request to: (1) verify that the course(s) would significantly improve the employee's skill or knowledge in the performance of his/her current position, or prepare the employee for advancement to another position within MIEMSS; and (2) verify that the employee has been rated Satisfactory or better in his/her most recent performance appraisal. Questions about whether a requested course would prepare an employee for another position in MIEMSS should be directed to the Chief Administrative Officer. The supervisor must sign the Tuition Reimbursement Program Request form whether the request is approved or denied. If the request is denied, the reason(s) for denial must be stated on the Form.
- c. The Tuition Reimbursement Program Request form must be submitted to the appropriate Senior Staff member who may either approve or deny the request. If the request is denied, the reason(s) for the denial must be stated on the form.
  - After the Tuition Reimbursement Program Request form has been signed by the Senior Staff member, the form, the signed Obligated Service Agreement and a signed Application for Out-Service Training Authorization must be submitted to the MIEMSS Chief Administrative Officer. The Chief Administrative Officer will verify that the request complies with all Program requirements. Note: Both approved and denied requests should be forwarded to the Chief Administrative Officer.
- d. The Chief Administrative Officer will also verify funding availability. If sufficient funds are available, the Chief Administrative Officer will approve the form and forward it to the Executive Director or his designee for review and approval.
- e. If the tuition reimbursement request exceeds the agency's delegated authority of \$2,500, the Chief Administrative Officer will forward the necessary forms to the Department of Budget and Management for final approval. After a final decision is rendered by the Executive Director or the Department of Budget and Management, the employee and immediate supervisor will be given copies of all forms indicating the final disposition of the request.
- f. If the employee changes courses after a Tuition Reimbursement Program Request form has been approved, the employee must notify his/her supervisor in writing immediately with a justification for the change. After supervisory approval, the MIEMSS Chief Administrative Officer will review the change and determine, with the Executive Director's approval, if reimbursement is still justified.



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- g. Once the course(s) has been completed, an employee who has met the Program requirements must submit, within 30 calendar days after the course(s) ends, the following to the MIEMSS Chief Administrative Officer: (a) a requisition for reimbursement; (b) an original grade or pass/fail report; (c) a copy of the bill for tuition; and (d) proof of payment of the eligible expenses. The MIEMSS Chief Administrative Officer will verify that all forms were properly completed and approved, that the completed courses were approved and that the minimum acceptable passing grade was achieved for each course.
- h. The Chief Administrative Officer will forward the entire tuition reimbursement packet to Accounts Payable. A state reimbursement check will be issued to the employee within 30 calendar days from the State Treasurer's Office.

#### 6. Additional Information

- a. MIEMSS may choose to discontinue the Tuition Reimbursement Program at any time. If the Program is discontinued or suspended, tuition reimbursement that has been previously approved will be honored.
- b. MIEMSS's approval of the Tuition Reimbursement Program Request does not guarantee reimbursement throughout the course of study towards a degree. Approval of tuition reimbursement must be obtained each semester, and may be denied if funds are not available for that semester.
- c. Tuition reimbursement may not be provided for courses where proper written approval was not obtained in advance.
- d. Failure to meet required deadlines may be cause for denial of tuition reimbursement. In certain extenuating circumstances, deadlines may be extended upon the approval of the Executive Director or his designee.
- e. When management denies a request for tuition reimbursement, the employee may appeal the denial in writing directly to the Executive Director. The appeal should state the reason(s) the employee believes the request should be approved.
- f. Tax withholdings are not deducted from tuition reimbursement. Generally, financial assistance for education expenses is not an employee taxable benefit. However, employees should refer to IRS Publication 15B for more information or consult a tax adviser.



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**Public/Private Designation: Public -** This document is approved for publication and unrestricted distribution.

Policy approved by MIEMSS:

Date: 1/07/2015

Signature:

Kevin G. Seaman, MD Executive Director



# College Tuition Reimbursement Program Attachment A

Effective Date: January 1, 2015

MIEMSS College Tuition Reimbursement Request form follows.

# **MIEMSS**

# COLLEGE TUITION REIMBURSEMENT PROGRAM REQUEST

Employee Inform	ation	
Name		
Classification		Unit
Tuition Reimburs	ement	
	(s) not taken as part of mber of courses/credits	a degree to be completed
Degree to be	egree program? If so: awarded	
Number of c	ourses/credits required	to complete degree
		to be taken each calendar yearnd Year)
	p (1/1011111 #	
space provided belowin your current position	w, describe how the cou	cumentation describing the course(s). In the urse(s) will improve your skills or knowledge movement to another position within the necessary):
-		
College or Educa	tional Institution	
Name of college or o	educational institution	
Address:		
On-line, in person, o	r both?	

IV.	Amount of Tuition Reimbursement Requeste	ed					
	Term: Start/ End/						
	Tuition	\$					
	Financial Aid: $\square$ Yes (List Below) $\square$ No <sup>1</sup>						
	$\square$ Pending <sup>2</sup>						
	Grants	\$					
	Scholarships	\$					
	Other (attach item detail)	\$					
	Total Financial Aid	\$					
	Net Out-of-Pocket Expenses	\$					
	Amount of Tuition Reimbursement Requested <sup>3</sup>	\$					
	<sup>2</sup> I declare under the penalties of perjury that I have applied for the Agency of the amount of financial aid awarded to or rece tuition reimbursement requested may be adjusted based on the (Initials)	eived by me. I understand that the amount of					
	<sup>3</sup> The amount of financial assistance in any one semester or ter for each course, not to exceed a maximum of two (2) course the course is not based on a per credit rate, the maximum am semester or term shall be based upon the comparable hours runiversity undergraduate course times the allowable State per two courses.	s, times the allowable State per-credit rate. If sount of financial assistance in any one normally required of a three-credit college or					
V.	Employee's Certification						
. •	I declare under the penalties of perjury that to the best of my knowledge and belief that the information I have given herein is true and correct, and that I have read and understand the provisions of the Agency's College Tuition Reimbursement Program Policy and the Obligated Service Agreement.						
	Signature	Date					

Superviso	ry Approval					
Employee v	vas rated Satisfacto	ry or above in	n most rec	ent perform	nance appraisal	:
	Yes [or degree will:	□ No (deny	request &	explain b	elow)	
Improve t	he employee's skill	and knowled	lge in curr	ent positio	on $\square$ Yes	□ No
-	e employee for and east one box must be ch			-	☐ Yes xplanation below.)	□ No
Explanation	:					
Immediate S	Supervisor:	□ Арр	proved	□ De	enied (explain b	elow)
	Signature		_		Date	
Senior Staff	Member:	□ Арр	proved	□ De	enied (explain b	elow)
	Signature		_		Date	
Agency C	ertification					
Chief Admi	nistrative Officer:					
Req	uest for financial as	ssistance com	plies with	Program r	equirements:	
Emp	☐ Yes		☐ No ed Service	Agreeme	nt:	
	□ Yes		□ No			
Fund	ds are available for	the current se	emester or	term:		
	☐ Yes		□ No (	(deny requ	est & explain b	elow)
	Signature		_		Date	

XIII.	Agency Approval/Denial							
	Executive Director:	☐ Approved	☐ Denied (explain below)					
	Explanation:							
	_							
	Signature		Date					

# MIEMSS TUITION REIMBURSEMENT PROGRAM REQUEST

## Instructions

General – This Form must be completed for each request for tuition reimbursement, even if the course of study is included in a previously approved request.

# I. Employee Information

- Print your name.
- List your **current** classification and unit. Do **not** list a classification, position or unit within MIEMSS for which you may otherwise qualify as a result of this course.

#### II. Tuition Reimbursement

- Check only one box.
- If you are enrolling in one or more courses for one or more semesters but will not receive a degree upon completion, check the first box. Each course must improve your skills or knowledge in your current position or prepare you for movement to another position within the Agency.
- If you are enrolling in one or more courses for one or more semesters that will result in you earning a degree upon completion of all course requirements, check the second box.
- Attach any brochures, pamphlets, catalogs or other documentation that describe the
  course of study supporting this request. If this is the initial request and the course of
  study is included in a degree program, attach any brochures, pamphlets, catalogs or
  other documentation that describe the program.
- Briefly describe how the course(s) will improve your skills or knowledge in your current classification or position *or* prepare you for movement to another classification or position within the Agency. You must specifically identify the classification or position for which the course(s) will improve your skills and knowledge. There need not be a vacant position within the Agency in order to qualify for tuition reimbursement.

# III. College or Educational Institution

- List the college or educational institution providing the course work, including any online courses.
- Provide the mailing address of the school that will be providing the instructional program, even if the course work will be taken online.

# IV. Amount of tuition reimbursement assistance requested

- Indicate the starting and ending dates for the current term, semester or period applicable to this request.
- List all tuition costs for the current term, semester, or period, regardless of the number of courses or credits taken in the current term.
- List all financial aid that has been awarded or received for the current term, semester or period. Do not include any student loans or Agency-funded tuition reimbursement included in this request. If financial aid is received in the current term that is applicable to a prior term for which Agency-funded tuition reimbursement was provided, the employee must submit a revised request form for that term.
- If you have not applied for or been awarded financial aid at the time of this request, you must sign an affirmative statement to that effect. You must also affirm that, if you are awarded or receive financial aid subsequent to this request, you must promptly notify the agency of the amount of the financial aid. If you have applied for financial aid and the award is pending, leave the amount blank. The amount of tuition reimbursement requested will be adjusted based on the actual financial aid awarded to or received by you subsequent to this request. Failure to list all financial aid or to promptly notify the Agency of subsequent financial aid could result in the denial or forfeiture of all Agency-funded tuition reimbursement as well as disciplinary action, including dismissal from State service.
- Net Out-of-Pocket expenses is the difference between the total tuition and the total financial aid, not including any Agency-funded tuition reimbursement. This is the amount eligible for reimbursement subject to the following limitations.
- The amount of tuition reimbursement in any one semester or term shall be based upon the number of credits for each course, not to exceed a maximum of two (2) courses, times the allowable State per-credit rate. If the course is not based on a per credit rate, the amount of tuition reimbursement in any one semester or term will be based upon the equivalent of a three-credit course times the allowable State per-credit rate, not to exceed a maximum of two (2) equivalent courses.

# Examples:

	Ex	Example 1		kample 2
Tuition	\$	2,700	\$	2,700
<b>Total Eligible Tuition</b>	\$	2,700	\$	2,700
Grants	\$		\$	500
Scholarships	\$	<u> </u>	\$	500
Other	\$		\$	
Total Financial Aid	\$		\$	1,000
Net Out-of-Pocket Expenses	\$	2,700	\$	1,700

Example 1 – An employee enrolls in three courses (9 credits) at a cost of \$300 per credit. No financial aid is received. Although the employee's out-of-pocket expenses total \$2,700, the employee is approved for \$1,740 in financial assistance as follows: Maximum of two courses (6 credits) at \$290 per credit (sample allowable State per-credit rate) or \$1,740.

Example 2 – Assume the same facts as in Example 1 above, except that the employee receives financial aid totaling \$1,000. Since the employee's net out-of-pocket expenses (\$1,700) are less than the maximum that would have been approved (\$1,740), the employee would be entitled to the full \$1,700.

# V. Employee's Certification

- Employees are required to certify that the information provided in the request is true and correct to the best of their knowledge and belief.
- It is incumbent upon each employee to read and understand the College Tuition Reimbursement Program Policy and the Obligated Service Agreement. This is a binding contract between the employee and MIEMSS.
- If there are any statements contained in these documents that you do not fully understand, contact the Chief Administrative Officer for an explanation **before you sign the documents.**

# VII. Supervisory Approval

- An employee must have received a Satisfactory or above in his/her most recent performance appraisal in order to be approved for tuition reimbursement.
- In order to be approved for tuition reimbursement, the course must improve the employee's skills and knowledge in his/her current position or prepare the employee for movement to another position within the Agency. If unsure if the course will improve the employee's skills or knowledge in his/her current position or any other position within the Agency, contact the Chief Administrative Officer for guidance.
- A brief explanation must be provided as to how the course will improve the employee's skills or knowledge in his/her current position or any other position within the Agency.

# **VIII. Agency Certification**

- The Chief Administrative Officer will verify that all program requirements have been met and that the employee has completed an Obligated Service Agreement.
- The Chief Administrative Officer shall certify that sufficient funds are available for the current term and will ensure that funds are encumbered pending the final disposition of the request.

# IX. Agency Approval

- All requests for tuition reimbursement must have the approval of the Executive Director or his designee.
- Requests for tuition reimbursement should be submitted to the Executive Director or his designee by the Chief Administrative Officer only after all required documents have been prepared and all signatures and certifications have been obtained.

# X. Agency Denial

- If the request for tuition reimbursement is denied, the reason(s) for the denial must be stated on the form.
- The individual denying the request must sign the denial.
- The employee may appeal an agency denial in writing directly to the Executive Director. The appeal must state the reason(s) why the employee believes the denial is invalid and provide any supporting documentation.
- The Executive Director has thirty (30) business days in which to render a final decision for the Agency.



# College Tuition Reimbursement Program Attachment B

Effective Date: January 1, 2015

State of Maryland Application For Out-Service Training Authorization form follows.

# STATE OF MARYLAND APPLICATION FOR OUT-SERVICE TRAINING AUTHORIZATION

Major State Department	Agency, Institution, or Unit Agency Code		ode					
Employee's Name (Last, First, MI)		Social Sec.	#	Position Classification		ification	Phone Number	
Duties To Which Requested Training Relates:							Probation	on Over?
		er Development		Related [an is on file,	] plea	se check:		
Please Indicate Type of Out-Service  Tuition Reimbursement		raining: Long -Term		☐ Short -Te	rm	☐ Work	Study	
	TR	AINING AP	Pl	LIED FOR	7			
Name and Address of Organiz Training	zatior		Atta	urse Title ar ach Brochu scribing Co	re o	r Catalog		Semester Hours
Duration of Training Beginning Date		·		ESTIMATI	E OF	COST		
Ending Date	Regis	stration or Tuition	n	State Paid		Paid by (	Others	Total
Hours of Training	Book	s, etc.						
Working Hours	Trave	el .						
After Work Weekly Total	Roon	n and Subsistenc	е					
	Estim	nated Total						
		unt of State nse Approved \$			M	lethod of Tr	avel	
I Certify That The Information Gi Application is Correct and Requ	ven ir	n This			1			
pp					Sigr	nature and	Date	
The Appointing Authority of this agence approves this application and certifies that funds are available.	Department approves this application this training			retary of DBM authorizes ing as consistent with policy, d regulations				
(Sign				(Si	gn)			(Sign)
(Date	e)			(Da	ate)		(Date)	
(Title	e)		(Title)		(Title)			

Copies: 1. Secretary of DBM MS-551 (Revised 8/05)

2. Secretary of Department

3. Appointing Authority

4. Applicant



# College Tuition Reimbursement Program Attachment C

Effective Date: January 1, 2015

MIEMSS College Tuition Reimbursement Program Obligated Service Agreement follows.

# MIEMSS College Tuition Reimbursement Program OBLIGATED SERVICE AGREEMENT

het	This Obligated Service Agreement, herein referred to as "Agreement," is entered into by and tween (hereinafter referred to as the Employee) and
	EMSS ("Agency").
acc	In consideration for receipt of tuition reimbursement, job assignments and benefits which may crue hereafter Employee agrees to the following terms and conditions:
1.	Employee accepts tuition reimbursement in accordance with the terms and conditions of the MIEMSS College Tuition Reimbursement Program Policy which is incorporated by reference into this Agreement.
2.	Employee shall remain in the employment of the Agency following completion of the course(s) for a period equal to six (6) months for each equivalent course for which tuition reimbursement was received.
3.	Employee agrees that the obligated service requirement shall be computed by MIEMSS based upon available information and documentation describing the course(s). The period of obligated service shall commence on the first day of the month following completion of the course(s) for which tuition reimbursement was received.
4.	If Employee fails to remain employed by MIEMSS for the full period of obligated service as listed above in (2), Employee agrees to repay MIEMSS on a pro rata basis any tuition reimbursement received. Notwithstanding the above, in the discretion of the Executive Director, an Employee may be released from the terms of this Agreement for an undue hardship.
5.	Employee agrees that amounts which become due MIEMSS as a result of Employee's failure to meet the terms of this Agreement may be withheld from any monies due the Employee from the State of Maryland. If such monies are insufficient to repay the amounts which become due to MIEMSS, MIEMSS may pursue legal recourse to collect the amounts due, including but not limited to referring the account to the State of Maryland Central Collection Unit.
6.	Employee's service obligation for this term is months, which shall begin on / 01/
Da	teSignature of Employee
Da	te
	Executive Director



# College Tuition Reimbursement Program Attachment D

Effective Date: January 1, 2015



MARTIN O'MALLEY Governor ANTHONY BROWN Lieutenant Governor T. ELOISE FOSTER Secretary

#### **MEMORANDUM**

TO: Personnel Directors, State Personnel Management System

FROM: Cynthia A. Kollner

Executive Director

Office of Personnel Selvices and Benefits

DATE: July 7, 2014

RE: Tuition Reimbursement Rate Changes

The following are tuition reimbursement rates effective for Summer 2014 – Fall 2014. These are the maximum reimbursements allowed for employees participating in the State's Tuition Reimbursement Program. Departments may reimburse employees up to:

UNDERGRADUATE TUITION \$317 PER CREDIT

GRADUATE TUITION \$602 PER CREDIT

The tuition reimbursement rates are effective July 1, 2014. You may find the Out-Service Training Authorization and Obligated Service Agreement forms on the Personnel Officers' website under Personnel Services Division Forms. Please consider using the Obligated Service Agreement to make sure your agency is getting the benefit of the education and/or training paid for through this reimbursement program.

As a reminder, your Department's Secretary may approve reimbursements up to \$2,500 and any requests above \$2,500 must be approved by the Department of Budget and Management (DBM). Please contact Sheryl Hagood, HR Administrator, at 410-767-4976 with any questions.

cc: T. Eloise Foster, Secretary, DBM Sheryl Hagood, HR Administrator, Personnel Services Division, DBM