

## **Number 15.1 - EDUCATIONAL LEAVE**

Effective Date: March 1, 1996

Revised Date: January 1, 2000

Applicable To: All classified employees with the Executive Branch with the State of Vermont.

Issued By: Department of Personnel

Approved By: Kathleen C. Hoyt, Secretary of Administration

### **PURPOSE AND POLICY STATEMENT**

The purpose of educational leave is to allow an employee to pursue training directly related to his or her employment which will improve the employee's competence and ability to serve in State government. The training must be of direct value to the State as finally determined by the Commissioner of Personnel. The cost of training courses required by the employer are normally paid for by the State. In certain cases, Departments may elect to pay for the tuition or registration costs of non-job required employee coursework, such as seminars. These cases are separate from the formal tuition reimbursement programs administered by the State taken during working hours or on the employee's own time.

### **DEFINITIONS**

EDUCATIONAL LEAVE - is an employee's absence from duty to attend a formal course of study.

### **GENERAL GUIDELINES**

The Educational Leave and Career Development Article of the current Agreements between the State of Vermont and the Vermont State Employees' Association, Inc. provides further clarification regarding educational leave, and must be adhered to.

Requests for educational leave (with or without pay) must be made and approved prior to enrollment in a course of study. Once the supervisor approves the request, it must then be approved by the appointing authority, and then by the Commissioner of Personnel (or designee). Many agencies and departments require that the request be routed through the agency/department personnel officer and/or training officer prior to final approval by the appointing authority.

Employees must pass the course and agree to continue employment with the State for one calendar year for each academic year of paid educational leave granted to them. If an employee chooses to leave before one year, the employee must reimburse the State for all funds received, including salary for release time. This reimbursement will be prorated according to the unexpired period of obligation.

Appointing authorities may authorize release time without charge to leave for employees who wish to take partial-day absences (not to exceed 8 hours per week) and short absences of less than a full pay period to attend non-job required course work. These courses must be directly related to an employee's current job duties, or consistent with a career development plan approved in advance by the appointing authority and the Commissioner of Personnel.

Time spent on educational leave is counted in determining the rate of annual and sick leave accrual and reduction-in-force rights. However, no leave benefits shall be accrued or credited to employees during the period of leave.

Requests for educational leave must include the following information:

- Course title.
- Instructional agency.
- Course location.
- Course cost.
- Course schedule (hours per day, days per week, number of weeks).
- Description of course content.

Employees who are on paid educational leave may not receive tuition reimbursement under either the contractual or Managerial/Confidential Tuition Reimbursement Programs.

## **REIMBURSEMENT OF TUITION OR REGISTRATION COSTS**

Departments may, at their sole discretion, elect to reimburse employees for some or all of the cost of tuition or registration for non-job required courses. (Such reimbursement is separate and apart from the formal Tuition Reimbursement Programs administered by the State.) Requests for reimbursement of tuition or registration charges will be considered only when the following conditions are met:

- for job-related courses which are not required by the employer; and
- for courses which have been approved, in advance, by the Department; and
- for courses that the employee passes; and
- the employee meets any other requirements or restrictions the Department deems appropriate.

Upon successful completion of a course, a Request for Reimbursement for Expenses (Form AAF-8) must be completed and submitted to the employer through the normal expense reimbursement process. Receipts and proof of satisfactory completion of the course must be attached to the Form AAF-8. Reimbursement to the employee will be made from the appropriate funding source of the employing agency. Reimbursement for up to \$5,250 per year for courses is not taxable to the employee (26 CR 1.127.2).

Departments wishing to pay any approved tuition/registration costs directly to the provider, in advance of the course, should contact the Personnel Department before the course begins to determine how such payments can be processed and what documentation will be required. Employees who do not successfully complete such pre-paid courses must reimburse the State for the applicable tuition/registration costs.

### **EDUCATIONAL LEAVE WITHOUT PAY**

Educational leave without pay may be granted to a permanent status classified employee to encourage his/her self development and job value to the State. Upon the request of the employee and with the recommendation of the appointing authority, an educational leave without pay may be authorized for a period of up to two years by the Commissioner of Personnel when a desired course of study is likely to improve the quality of the employee's service to the State.

1. An employee granted such leave will not be obligated to continue employment with the State of Vermont.
2. Neither sick nor annual leave shall be accrued during the periods while the employee is on educational leave. Such period shall be counted in determining the rate of annual and sick leave accrual and reduction-in-force rights.
3. An employee granted leave for educational purposes may elect to receive a cash payment for accrued annual leave upon entering leave status, or s/he may retain leave credits for use upon return to active employment.
4. An employee who does not return to work within thirty (30) days of completion of the authorized course of studies may be terminated from State service.

Signed By Kathleen C. Hoyt, January 3, 2000

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Approved, Secretary of Administration