



Minnesota Judicial Branch Policy

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Reimbursement for Education Expenses

I. PURPOSE

The Minnesota Judicial Branch is committed to the need for the continued professional growth and development of all judicial branch judges and employees.

II. REFERENCES

None.

III. DEFINITIONS

None.

IV. POLICY STATEMENT

A. Judicial Education

Reimbursement for education expenses incurred by Judges, judicial officers, employee child support magistrates and referees shall be governed by this policy.

1. If funds are allocated by the Judicial Council for reimbursement of education expenses to the judicial districts, to the Court of Appeals and to the Supreme Court, these funds may be made available to justices, judges, child support magistrates or referees, for reimbursement for their participation in programs approved for Continuing Judicial Education (CJE) credit by the Human Resources and Development (HRD) Division of State Court Administration (SCAO) and at the discretion of their respective Chief Judge or the Chief Justice. With respect to child support magistrates, the Chief Judge should consult with the Manager of the Child Support program concerning funding availability and program needs.

2. Senior judges may be reimbursed for participation in either the Minnesota Judicial Branch Annual Conference of Judges or the annual meeting sponsored by the Minnesota District Judges Association (MDJA) and/or Foundation (MDJF) if the senior judge has taken assignments as a senior or active judge in the district or appellate courts for a minimum of five days in the preceding fiscal year. Senior judges may be reimbursed for expenses incurred for participation in additional programs provided by SCAO if participant seats are available. At the discretion of the HRD Director, a senior judge may receive reimbursement under this section if the senior judge has volunteered a minimum of five days to Judicial Council and/or SCAO projects during the preceding fiscal year.
3. Judges, judicial officers, child support magistrates and referees will be reimbursed for expenses incurred when attending or serving as faculty for education programs provided by SCAO or by MDJA/MDJF and approved for CJE credit by HRD. Participation in these aforementioned education programs is subject to approval by the Chief Justice or respective Chief Judge.
4. Requests for reimbursement of education expenses must be submitted to the Finance Division of the State Court Administrator's Office. The Finance Division will track education expenditures within budget categories as allocated by the Judicial Council. Tracking reports will be provided to the respective Chief Judge or the Chief Justice and to Judicial District Administrators on a monthly basis in order to monitor spending within allocation budgets.

B. Managers' and Directors' Education

1. Full time, permanent managers and directors, as defined in the Judicial Branch Human Resources Rules, will be fully reimbursed for courses up to the 45 required credit hours.
2. Courses conducted by or in conjunction with HRD are automatically approved for state reimbursement.
3. Full time, permanent, managers and directors may also apply for expense reimbursement under the limitations outlined in section C of this policy.

C. Judicial Branch Personnel Education

1. Employees shall not incur costs for courses, seminars, conferences and workshops they are required to attend. Reimbursement for discretionary courses, seminars, conferences and workshops is at the discretion of the appointing authority subject to the availability of funds.
2. Subject to the availability of funds and at the discretion of the Judicial District Administrator (or his or her designee) or the State Court Administrator's Office

Division Head (or his or her designee), an employee may request reimbursement of expenses incurred for courses taken at an institution accredited by a group that is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education or the Council for Higher Education Accreditation, with the following limitations:

- a. Permanent, full-time employees (40 hours per week) that have passed their probationary period may be reimbursed up to 75 percent of costs, as defined in paragraph b, of education expenses up to a maximum of \$3,750 of incurred expenses per fiscal year. Permanent employees working less than full-time may have their reimbursement prorated based on FTE. Courses to be reimbursed must meet one of the following conditions: be job-related or be required in order to obtain a job-related undergraduate degree or graduate degree; or be a job-related Ph.D. program. Courses must be part of an accredited program that directly improves an employee's performance in his or her job; helps achieve his or her department's service mission, goals, and objectives; or relates to a reasonably accessible promotional position.
- b. Tuition fees, tuition surcharges and lab fees are eligible expenses. Cost of books, supplies, memberships, parking, activity tickets, travel expenses or other charges for items or services other than actual instruction are not eligible expenses. Expenses that are or will be covered by a scholarship or grant are not eligible for reimbursement under this policy.
- c. The employee shall submit to his or her supervisor an Education Reimbursement Application form (Appendix A), prior to the beginning of the course. Reimbursement is contingent upon satisfactory completion of a course and documentation of expenses paid. For courses taken for academic credit and graded, a grade "C" or better is required. A "Satisfactory" or "Pass" is acceptable for courses that are not letter graded. For Ph.D. programs, a letter of progress from the employee's college advisor, on official university letterhead, will be acceptable for reimbursement.
- d. If employment with the Minnesota Judicial Branch ends within one year of receiving education reimbursement under this policy, the employee will be responsible for partial repayment of the reimbursement. The repayment amount will be calculated based upon the number of work days unfulfilled prior to the one year anniversary of the reimbursement. The computation of the repayment amount is as follows:

$((\text{Total Annual Work Days} - \text{Actual Days Worked}) \div \text{Total Annual Work Days}) \times \text{Total Reimbursement} = \text{Repayment Amount}$

The employee agrees that the Branch may deduct any outstanding repayment amount from the employee's remaining paychecks and the employee agrees to promptly repay any remaining outstanding balance.

3. The state will not reimburse expenses for CLEs unless admission to practice law is a required condition of employment in the job and/or with supervisor's approval. Law clerks are not eligible for reimbursement of CLE expenses.

V. IMPLEMENTATION AUTHORITY

Implementation of this policy shall be the responsibility of the chief judges of the ten judicial districts and the Court of Appeals, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, and the State Court Administrator.