



**COUNTY OF MERCER
OFFICE OF PERSONNEL**
McDade Administration Building
P.O. Box 8068
Trenton, NJ 08650-0068
(609) 989-6676 Fax (609) 989-6535

Dan Benson
County Executive

Sharon Shinkle Gardner
Chief of Staff

Christopher R. Marion
County Administrator

County of Mercer Staff Development Program

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The Mercer County Staff Development program is designed to provide financial assistance to County employees seeking educational (including vocational education) opportunities. Additionally, this program is aimed at encouraging County employees to enhance their job performance to the County through attendance at professional conferences, training workshops and/or seminars. This assistance is provided in three (3) ways: (1) Tuition Reimbursement, (2) Conference and (3) Training/Seminars. The general criteria used to determine program participation is as follows:

- An employee must possess full-time status with the County. Temporary, Part-time, Seasonal and Stand-by employees are ineligible.
- Employees must be actively working. If the employee is on a leave of absence, he/she may not participate in the Staff Development Program.
- All training and college courses must be job related and pre-approved by the Department Director. Authorization will be granted when training will (1) enable the employee to better perform in his/her current job title or (2) assist the employee in moving to the next promotional step.
- If an employee is no longer employed at the time they seek reimbursement or receive their transcript of grades for the semester, the employee will not be eligible for reimbursement under this policy.
- All requests and reimbursement forms including Evaluation Report (TR-375) are available in the Office of Personnel, Mercer County Administration Building. All forms must be returned to this office for processing.

- All authorized reimbursements will be made only after the employee attends the program except for registration fees, which can be paid in advance by a purchase order as long as approval has been met.

Rules to follow when requesting participation in training/conference programs are:

- All requests must be submitted within the specified deadlines in order to provide ample time for the normal approval procedure to be instituted. Application schedules are noted below in specific account descriptions and on all approval request forms. All requests must be submitted prior to attendance at any training course, seminar or conference.
- All conference requests that include a request for overnight accommodations will be scrutinized and will only be granted when the benefit to the County is clearly demonstrated. Any such training must not be available within the local commuting area and must be essential to the performance of the employee's assigned duties. Costs in these circumstances will be strictly scrutinized and travel and accommodation expenses disproportional to conference cost may be a basis for denial of reimbursement.
- All requests for approval will be directed to the Personnel Director.
- The Personnel Director and the County Administrator must approve all requests.
- All incomplete requests will be returned to the employee with a statement of missing information.
- Participants will receive notification in writing of the decision to their request for tuition, conference, training and seminar. Questions regarding the program should be forwarded to the Office of Personnel at (609) 989-6676.
- Overtime will not be granted if an employee is attending a seminar, training or conference that will be longer than their normal workday. This includes additional time it will take to travel to and from training site.
- Meal allowance will not be granted for employees attending seminar and training courses unless noted in their union contract.

TUITION REIMBURSEMENT

Requests for tuition reimbursement will be reviewed prior to the fall, spring and summer semesters. All requests must be in the Office of Personnel by the first day of August, December or May for consideration. An employee may apply for tuition reimbursement for 6 credits per semester up to a maximum of 18 credits per year.

When requesting reimbursement of a specific college course, the applicant must use the tuition reimbursement request form. The course description with number of credits per course from the college must be attached to the request form. This form contains all pertinent information and must be filled out completely for processing.

After all authorizations are obtained, the applicant will be notified as to whether or not approval has been given. If approval was given, the applicant must satisfactorily complete the

course before submitting for reimbursement. At that time, the applicant should submit a Mercer County Training Reimbursement Program Course Evaluation Report (formTR-375), copies of all pertinent receipts indicating payment and a copy of the applicant's transcript indicating a grade C or better. This expedites the reimbursement procedures. The Office of Personnel will process a purchase order for reimbursement to employee.

An applicant must obtain a grade C or better to receive reimbursement. An applicant may not receive reimbursement for more than six credits in any one semester. Each course is evaluated individually and must be related to the applicant's current position.

An applicant may receive tuition reimbursement for attending classes at Mercer County Community College, Mercer County Vocational/Technical School as well as any other recognized College or University. Employees will be reimbursed at the current rate per credit charged to Mercer County Residents at Mercer County Community College. Reimbursements will be forwarded after submission of all paperwork.

TRAINING COURSES/SEMINARS

Requests to attend training and/or seminars must be submitted to the Office of Personnel 14-days prior to registration.

When requesting authorization to participate in training and/or seminar, the applicant must complete and submit the conference/training request form to the Office of Personnel. Please attach to the approval form a copy of the brochure or article describing the training and/or seminar including all costs asking to be reimbursed. Mileage is reimbursed on an applicant's personal vehicle at the rate of \$0.31 per mile. Please provide a print out from Google Maps indicating miles asking to be reimbursed.

Employee must first determine whether use of a County vehicle is available before requesting mileage reimbursement for personal vehicle use. After the request is reviewed, the applicant will be notified as to approval or disapproval. If approval is granted and registration fee must be paid before attending then a purchase order may be processed by employee. Upon completion of approved training and/or seminars, the applicant should process a purchase order for reimbursement of funds.

When complete the purchase voucher must be sent to the Office of Personnel with all receipts, evaluation report and any other necessary information that is requested in employee's approval memo.

CONFERENCES

The same procedure is followed as for training/seminar requests. However, this account is set aside for conferences, which include transportation, lodging and meal expenses. It is imperative that these costs are included on the request form estimated to the nearest dollar possible. Please note that overnight accommodations will be scrutinized and will only be granted when the benefit to the County is clearly demonstrated.

Employees interested in attending a conference must submit requests 60 days prior to the conference registration deadline. All written information on rates for registration, lodging, and travel must be attached to approval request along with information on conference. Mileage is reimbursed on an applicant's personal vehicle at the rate of \$.31 per mile. Please provide a print out from Google Maps indicating miles asking to be reimbursed. Employee must first determine whether use of a County vehicle is available before requesting mileage reimbursement for personal vehicle use. Employees will not be eligible for reimbursement for use of a rental car unless extreme circumstances require one.

Meals are reimbursed according to the following schedule:

Breakfast	\$ 8.00
Lunch	\$12.00
Dinner	\$20.00

Lodging is reimbursed at the lowest rate available.

Reimbursement is filed for in the same manner as for training and seminar requests. Please note that lodging, meals and transportation receipts must be submitted with all other pertinent receipts attached to a purchase voucher.