



# Tuition Reimbursement Program

The Child Protective Investigations (CPI) Tuition Reimbursement Program reimburses eligible staff for the costs of tuition, fees, and books. To be eligible, staff must be enrolled in an educational program that is relevant to current or prospective job duties within CPI.

**For questions, contact:**

[dfpscpituitionreimbursement@dfps.texas.gov](mailto:dfpscpituitionreimbursement@dfps.texas.gov)

## Basic Process Overview

The process from submitting the application to notification of decisions is approximately six weeks, but may take longer based on CPI Division activities, demands, legislative session, Governor inquiries, etc.

Below is a basic overview of the CPI Tuition Reimbursement process:

- Announcement for application submissions
- Application deadline
- Applications reviewed for selection
- Selection/rejection notification
- Those selected for the CPI Tuition Reimbursement Program submit for reimbursement of funds for completed and passed classes
  - Those accepted into the program will not need to reapply each fiscal year so long as they are in good standing based on grades and performance
  - The Tuition Reimbursement Coordinator will check in yearly with applicant and supervisor to ensure there is commitment to the program
- Graduate/exit Tuition Reimbursement Program
- Complete a work obligation period in CPI or repay reimbursed funds according to promissory note terms

## Funds

Funds are dependent on availability in a given fiscal year\* **and are not guaranteed**. The current maximum reimbursement per fiscal year (FY) is \$5,000. The \$5,000 may be reimbursed at one time or over the course of the fiscal year.

\*Fiscal years run from 9/1 – 8/31; example: FY 2023 runs 9/1/2022 – 8/31/2023. FY 2023 is inclusive of the Fall 2022, Spring 2023, and Summer 2023 semesters.

## Eligibility for Selection

- At the time of application, applicants must be a full-time DFPS CPI classified employee for at least 12 consecutive months
- Current performance evaluation shows employee to be in good standing, with no documented or pending performance issues or violations of work rules within the last 12 months
- Apply by published deadlines
- Application fully completed
  - Incomplete applications are automatically rejected

## Obligations of Recipients

An employee who requests reimbursement of educational expenses is required to adhere to the below criteria:

- Pursue the degree plan approved during the selection process that is related to work in child welfare.
- Sign an agreement to work for CPI that equals the number of months reflected in the CPI Tuition Reimbursement Program Work Payback Period Chart on Pg. 9 of this fact sheet.
  - Work payback periods are consecutive, not concurrent. Example: a participant signs a promissory note for FY21 with a 12 months' work payback period. That same participant then signs a promissory note for FY22 with a 9-month work payback period. Those two promissory notes would add up to a 21-month payback period at the exit of the program.
  - See the "Work Payback Period" section of this document for additional information on the number of months obligated for reimbursement.
- Submit proof of successful completion of courses within the requested timeframes.
- Maintain a position with the CPI with a continued performance standard of "meets" or "exceeds" expectations.

## Removal from the Program

Employees may be removed from the program for the following reasons:

1. No enrollment in classes for three consecutive semesters/trimesters, four

- consecutive quarters, or one year for non-traditional programs
2. No request for reimbursement for three consecutive semesters/trimesters, four consecutive quarters, or one year for non-traditional programs
  3. Change of education program without first obtaining written approval in advance from the CPI Tuition Reimbursement Selection Committee
  4. Withdrawal from school with no anticipation of returning
  5. Transferring out of CPI to a different division such as Conservatorship
  6. Falls below a "meets expectations" on a performance evaluation
  7. Placed on corrective action
  8. Confirmed fraudulent reimbursement requests
    - This infraction may include corrective action up to termination
  9. Other reasons as determined by the Associate Commissioner of Child Protective Investigations

If an employee is removed from the CPI Tuition Reimbursement Program, the repayment obligation begins the first day of the month following removal. Employees are considered to have withdrawn from the program at the conclusion of the most recently reimbursed semester, quarter, trimester, or as applicable for non-traditional programs.

## Degree Programs

The following academic fields are approved for the CPI Tuition Reimbursement Program.

1. Social Work
2. Sociology
3. Criminal Justice
4. Psychology
5. Related degrees
  - Approval of a "related" degree plan is determined by the CPI Tuition Reimbursement Program Selection Committee and based on additional factors, such as CPI Division need, professional history and known goals of the applicant

Qualified educational programs include: Certificates\* that accompany a degree program, Associate's, Bachelor's, Master's, or Doctorate

## Eligible Expenses

Qualified expenses (grade report and official Bursar's invoices required)

### **Associate's or Bachelor's**

- Tuition – grades of C and above, S for Satisfactory, or P for Pass/Fail courses
- Books – see below situations
  - Books are given to the agency for the agency library
  - Or an affidavit will be completed stating the employee will keep the books for future reference

Reimbursed book purchases are subject to request for verification of possession

- Payback required if verification of possession cannot be provided\*
- Possible dismissal from the program based on circumstances

If sold back, reimbursement is less than the sell back amount

- Purchase and sell back receipts will be required so that the amount can be correctly determined

*\*If the employee experiences a flood, break-in, fire, etc. and is unable to produce the books, no action would be taken.*

- Mandatory fees reflected on official Bursar receipts  
Example: Lab fees or any other automation-related fees

### **Masters or Doctorate**

- Tuition – grades of B and above, unless there is a documented exception of C being a passing grade for the program  
Example: in most law schools a C is a passing grade
- Tuition – if there is a documented exception of a P for Pass/Fail course being required and/or standard for the master's or doctorate program
  - Example:  
law school
- Books – see below situations
  - Books are given to the agency for the agency library
  - Or an affidavit will be completed stating the employee will keep the books for future reference

Reimbursed book purchases are subject to request for verification of possession

- Payback required if verification of possession

cannot be provided\*

- Possible dismissal from the program based on circumstances

If sold back, reimbursement is less than the sell back amount

- Purchase and sell back receipts will be required so that the amount can be correctly determined

*\*If the employee experiences a flood, break-in, fire, etc. and is unable to produce the books, no action would be taken.*

- Mandatory fees reflected on official Bursar receipts  
Example: Lab fees or any other automation-related fees

### **Ineligible Expenses**

- Late fees
- Prior or past due tuition/fees incurred while not enrolled in the CPI tuition reimbursement program
- Parking fees
- Tuition for
  - Any grade below a C for any course while pursuing an associate's or bachelor's degree
  - Any grade below a B for any course while pursuing a master's or doctorate unless proof directly from the school can be provided that the program will accept a C as a passing grade
  - F for Pass/Fail courses
- Courses that do not count towards the declared and agreed to degree program during the program selection process
- Tuition in any semester where the employee's performance evaluation falls below a "meets expectations" or the employee is on corrective action
- Tutoring
- Taxes or shipping on book expenses
- Notebooks, pens, paper, computers, or other similar supplies
- Tuition if a break in service occurs after a semester starts
- Any tuition reimbursement request submitted and deemed inapplicable or fraudulent



## **Work Time Allowed for Class Attendance**

Educational leave is paid time away from regular work duties to allow an employee to pursue a degree, certification, or license from an accredited institution of higher education or other recognized professional accrediting body. This leave is intended to supplement other types of leave when the employee's work schedule conflicts with the employee's ability to fulfill educational obligations.

Educational leave is considered a temporary change in the employee's work schedule and is not an entitlement. Approval of educational leave is at the discretion of DFPS and may be denied based on business need. An employee will not be granted more than **four hours** per week of educational leave. Educational leave may not be carried over from one week to another. See [DFPS HR Manual: Chapter 5: Work Leave](#) for more details. Accurate educational leave documentation is required in CAPPs by using the EDULV code.

The employee's first and second level supervisors, unless otherwise specified by the division director or regional director, review all requests for educational leave.


The employee's immediate supervisor then does the following:

- Assesses the employee's eligibility for educational leave.
- Indicates on [Form 5356](#)  the actions required to cover the employee's regular duties during the employee's absence, if recommending approval.
- Completes the remainder of [Form HR-5356](#)  and signs it.
- Asks the employee to sign an employment obligation agreement, if applicable.
- Forwards the form (and the agreement, if applicable) to the supervisor's manager.

The second-level supervisor then does the following:

- Reviews requests provided by the employee's immediate supervisor.
- Approves or denies the request.
- Returns the completed form (and the agreement, if applicable) to the immediate supervisor.

The employee's immediate supervisor then does the following:

- Notifies the employee that the request has been approved or denied.
- Distributes copies of [Form HR-5356](#)  (and the agreement, if applicable) to the HR office.

## Equipment Allowed for Studies

DFPS computers and equipment may be used for completion of schoolwork and assignments when the employee is on personal time, such as before or after normal workhours or during lunch or break.

Standard work-related content viewing rules apply. If there is a substantiated education program related research reason to view what would typically be considered a DFPS violation please contact [dfpscpituitionreimbursement@dfps.texas.gov](mailto:dfpscpituitionreimbursement@dfps.texas.gov).

## Applying for the CPI Tuition Reimbursement Program

Applications are reviewed and considered for approval by the CPI Tuition Reimbursement Program Selection Committee.

The Selection Committee is comprised, at minimum, of the below individuals. Additional individuals may be asked to participate in the selection process periodically.

- The CPI Associate Commissioner
- No less than three CPI directors
- Others as available and requested

Starting calendar year 2022, selection for the CPI Tuition Reimbursement Program will occur twice (two times) a year in advance of the traditional Fall and Spring semesters. Additional selections will be considered as needed for Summer or non-traditional semesters if there are funds available for additional participants.

## Applications and Information

- Applicants use the current CPI Tuition Reimbursement Program Application to apply
- Applications must be completed as prescribed in the application and include all applicable information at the time of **submission**
- Do not submit bills or invoices with an application
- **Automatic Rejections:**
  - Incomplete
  - Late
  - Mailed applications
  - Applications with inapplicable material attached, such as:
    - Invoices
    - Bills
    - School catalogs
    - Course syllabuses
    - Course catalogs
  - Using outdated forms
- A letter of recommendation may be attached
- In the event of two applicants being equally qualified, but funds not supporting both applicants being selected, additional documents may be requested for review

## Fairness and Equality Statement

The number of applications received may exceed the funding available. The CPI Tuition Reimbursement Program Selection Committee has established guidelines to equitably distribute the CPI Tuition Reimbursement Program funds based on the following:

- The applicant's personal statement
- Applicants pursuing a directly related field of study are given priority
- Continuing applications are given priority over new applications
- Tenure above the required minimum may be considered when selecting applicants
- The geographical distribution of the awards made may be considered
- Day and time submission of submission may be considered
- Funds are distributed equitably among the eligible applicants who are accepted into the CPI Tuition Reimbursement Program
- Examples ONLY:
  - ❖ 25 people apply and are accepted – each person would **potentially** receive \$5,000
  - ❖ 30 people apply and are accepted – each person would **potentially** receive \$4,166
- Maximum fund reimbursement per selected recipient may be reduced based on final CPI Tuition Reimbursement Program Selection Committee determination and/or based on funds available

The CPI Tuition Reimbursement Program selection committee reviews the budget each semester, or as applicable based on current agency needs, and adjusts priorities to ensure that available funds are used within the limits of the budget.

**NOTE: It is important to remember that Tuition Reimbursement Program funds are not guaranteed.**

## Documents Required for Reimbursement of Funds

**This section is only applicable to those accepted to the CPI Tuition Reimbursement Program.**

The required documents must be submitted to the designated e-mail box by the communicated deadline.

Additional information and instructions will be provided when a person is notified of selection for the CPI Tuition Reimbursement Program, below are examples of required information

- A grade report
- Itemized receipts for tuition and fees
- Itemized receipts for books and materials



# Timeframe for Submitting Documentation for Reimbursement

***This section is only applicable to those accepted to the CPI Tuition Reimbursement Program.***

Timeframes for fund reimbursement submissions will be communicated via e-mail as applicable and will be dependent on if an employee is participating in a semester, trimester, or quarterly academic program.

## Work Payback Period

***This section is only applicable to those accepted to the CPI Tuition Reimbursement Program.***

CPI Tuition Reimbursement Program recipients sign an agreement, called a promissory note, to work for CPI upon exiting the CPI Tuition Reimbursement Program. The work obligation period begins the first day of the month following the participant's exit from the CPI Tuition Reimbursement Program. Example:

- o Graduation
  - August 2, 2022
  - Obligation period begins September 1, 2022
- o Withdrawal from the CPI Tuition Reimbursement Program
  - September 1, 2022
  - Obligation period begins October 1, 2022

The agreement for payback is based on future months needed to be worked as an employee within CPI as indicated in the CPI Tuition Reimbursement Program Work Payback Period Chart below.

- Work payback formula equals the total reimbursable amount for each fiscal year divided by 12 months
  - Effective for FY2021 (fall 2020, spring 2021, and summer 2021) each recipient is eligible for a maximum reimbursement of \$5,000 per FY
    - ✦  $\$5,000/12 \text{ months} = \$416.67$
    - ✦ Work payback period = One (1) month for every \$417.00 unreimbursed funds
    - ✦ No partial weeks or months will be calculated
- Example:
- ✦  $\$4,000/\$417 = 9.59 \text{ months}$  (rounded to 10 months of work required for payback)

## CPI Work Payback Period Chart

Work Payback Months	Min Reimbursement	Max Reimbursement
1	1.00	417.00
2	417.01	834.00
3	834.01	1,251.00
4	1,251.01	1,668.00
5	1,668.01	2,085.00
6	2,058.01	2,502.00
7	2,502.01	2,919.00
8	2,919.01	3,336.00
9	3,336.01	3,753.00
10	3,753.01	4,170.00
11	4,170.01	4,587.00
12	4,587.01	5,000.00

## Separation\*\* from CPI Requires Monetary Payback

Participating employees who leave CPI before the work payback period is complete must payback the dollar amount of the total reimbursement remaining, plus interest on that sum at the agreed upon rate. Any work payback months that have occurred will be deducted from the original total. **No partial weeks or months will be calculated.**

Example:

- Employee receives a \$5,000 reimbursement through the CPI Tuition Reimbursement Program
- Employee is obligated to work for CPI for 12 months after exiting the CPI Tuition Reimbursement Program
- Employee separates from CPI and only works two of the 12 promised months in CPI before departing.
- Employee is required to pay back the amount reimbursed for the 10 months not worked, plus 6% interest per annum on the total reimbursed amount

Example:

- o Employee receives one (1) \$5,000 reimbursement
- o Employee works two (2) of the obligated months prior to separating from CPI
  - Amount forgiven based on the two (2) months worked:  $2 \times \$417.00 = \$834.00$
- o Employee would be required to pay back the amount equal to \$4,170 ( $\$5,000 - (2 \text{ months worked} \times \$417.00)$ ) + 6% interest for the 10 months not worked under the agreement
  - Time required to pay debt =  $10 \text{ months owed} / 12 \text{ months in a year} = .8333 \text{ years}$ 
    - Calculate to 4 decimal places, if present, for most accurate payment

- Total payback amount =  $\$4,170.00 + \$115.53 = \$4,285.53$
- Monthly payment: \$428.57 (from payment calculator)
- If monthly payment amount times the number of payback months does not equal the total payback amount, two different payment amounts must be determined as follows:
  - Nine(9) payments of  $\$428.57 = \$3,857.13$
  - One(1) final payment of  $\$428.40$  (found by:  $\$4,285.53$  total payback amount -  $\$3,857.13$  from 9 payments)
  - $\$3,857.13 + \$428.40 = \$4,285.53$   
(Total payback amount)
- o Payment Calculator: [www.calculator.net/payment-calculator](http://www.calculator.net/payment-calculator)

To reduce the amount owed, DFPS requires the recipient to forfeit her/his overtime and annual leave pay to offset any amounts owed to CPI. Any remaining debt is collected by the DFPS Office of Finance, Accounts Payable pursuant to the terms of the Promissory Note signed by the recipient of the reimbursement.

\* Certificates that accompany a degree, are an add-on to, or required for the declared degree program.

\*\* Separation is defined, for this purpose, as the last paid date within CPI regardless of reason. This does not include approved unpaid leaves of absence when there is a clear intent to return to a paid CPI position.