

DFCS Professional Enhancement Scholarship Program Guidelines

MISS. CODE 37-101-293, authorizes DFCS, within the limits of available funds, to grant scholarships to DFCS employees pursuing a Degree in Social Work. The Professional Enhancement Scholarship program is not a benefit to which an employee is entitled. The purpose of the program is to benefit the DFCS and its clients through enhanced social work knowledge and skill development of the staff.

The purpose of the scholarship program is to encourage employees to develop job related skills and to develop employees for higher-level professional and management positions. Priorities for awarding scholarships will be based on the established need within the agency for staff with the educational credentials being sought and the unavailability of individuals with those credentials in the relevant applicant pool.

Eligibility:

Scholarship Applications for studies in Social Work will be considered based on the area of most benefit to the agency. Employees who are considering studies in Social Work should seek counseling from his/her direct supervisor about the agency’s needs prior to submitting an application.

- To be eligible for consideration for the scholarship program an employee must have completed pre-service training and received a recommendation from their first and second line supervisor. If the director recommends disapproval, this should be discussed with the applicant at the time he or she receives the packet. In such cases, the Professional Enhancement Scholarship Committee will not review the application packet unless the applicant appeals to the committee. If the applicant appeals the committee will make a recommendation to the Executive Director of MDHS who has final approval authority.
- Scholarships will only be approved for public colleges and/or universities in the State of Mississippi with an accredited Master of Social Work program.
- To be eligible for such payments employee must be approved for the scholarship program prior to beginning courses.
- Educational expenses for tuition, books and approved associated fees shall be reimbursed to the employee only after the employee has submitted documentation that the approved course(s) has/have been successfully completed.
- Successful completion is defined as a “B” (3.0 on 4.0 scale) or higher in each course. Reimbursement will be considered on a course by course basis.
- The agency will not duplicate any tuition reimbursement obtained from other sources. Loans are exempt from this provision.
- Recipients are obligated to work for DFCS for a period of time after receiving degree, based on total expense to the DFCS.

<u>Cost to DFCS</u>	<u>Obligation</u>
\$3,900 or less	1 year
\$4,000 - 9,999	2 years
\$10,000-15,999	3 years
\$16,000-21,999	4 years
\$22,000-and above	5 years

- Recipients are required to take and pass the State of Mississippi Social Worker Exam appropriate for the degree obtained during the last semester of enrollment before graduation from the education program.

DFCS Professional Enhancement Scholarship Program Guidelines

- Recipients must retake the exam within 4 months if the employee does not pass the examination before graduation. The Employee will seek assistance to pass the examination through enrolling in a licensure review course. The employee shall pass the social work examination within one year following graduation. If the recipient fails to pass the licensure exam, he or she is liable for repayment of the compensation that he or she was paid.
- If at any time after one year post graduation the employee does take and pass the State of Mississippi Social Work Licensure Exam appropriate to the degree obtained the agency would forgive the remaining amount owed.
- Obtain a license to social work in Mississippi. The Employee must pay the fee for a license to practice social work to the Mississippi State Board of Examiners for Social Work and Marriage & Family Therapists.

Application:

The application process must be completed for at the beginning of the employee's time in school. Those received after the deadline will not be reviewed:

- The First Friday in April for Summer Semester
- The First Friday in June for Fall Semester
- The First Friday in November for Spring Semester

Application Process

The application packet for the Professional Enhancement Scholarship shall include: (Forms are available on the DFCS Connection website under the Professional Development tab)

- MDHS-PER-214 form with **original** signatures signed in blue ink
- Justification Letter submitted by the applicant stating reasons why the program of study will be beneficial to the DFCS and describing how the program of study relates to the present position of the employee
- Recommendations from **first** and **second** line supervisor
- Copy of Admissions Letter if first semester of attendance

The application packet shall be routed to the DFCS Professional Development Unit where it will be reviewed for completeness and presentation to the Professional Enhancement Scholarship Committee. Incomplete application packets may be returned to the applicant.

The Professional Enhancement Scholarship Committee will review each application and make a recommendation. Scholarships awards will be made in accordance with availability of funds.

Notification:

The applicant will be notified in writing of the disposition of the application. Those accepted will be notified via email and a contract will be enclosed.

- Sign the contract in blue ink and have it notarized

DFCS Professional Enhancement Scholarship Program Guidelines

- Return the signed contract to the Professional Development Unit within 10 days of receipt. The contract will then be signed by the Executive Office and a copy will be returned to the applicant and the original will be kept on file at State Office.

Continued Application:

Once you are selected for the scholarship there is no longer a need to reapply each semester. When the reimbursement packet is returned a letter must be included requesting to continue with the scholarship. This must be approved by the first and second line supervisor.

Submission:

Please submit your Professional Enhancement Scholarship paperwork to:

MDHS/DFCS
Professional Development Unit
P.O. Box 352
Jackson, MS 39202

Reimbursement Process

The maximum amount the applicant can be awarded for each semester is \$6,000 for tuition and fees and \$700 for books. To receive reimbursement, the approved employee shall submit the following documents directly to the Professional Development Unit in State Office:

- Applicant's grade report (a minimum of a "B" in each course is required for each semester)
- Itemized receipts for tuition, fees, and books with proof of payment
- Cover memo or letter stating amounts and type of reimbursements requested
- Memo requesting to continue the scholarship the next semester with approval from the first and second line supervisor. If you are no longer requesting the scholarship due to graduation or other reasons include this information with the reimbursement request as well.
- Return the reimbursement packet to:

MDHS/DFCS
Professional Development Unit
P.O. Box 250
Jackson, MS 39202

Repayment Requirements:

The payback for the Professional Enhancement Scholarship begins the day the employee graduates. The full terms of the recipient's obligation shall be specified in the contract between the recipient and the DFCS. This contract shall be entered into prior to awarding any form of scholarship assistance. The total award shall not exceed \$6000 for tuition and fees and \$700 for books per semester.

If the recipient does not work as an employee of the DFCS for the period of employment specified in the contract, the recipient shall be liable for repayment on demand of the remaining portion of the educational expenses paid, with interest accruing at ten percent (3%) per annum from the recipient's date of graduation, or the date the recipient last worked at the DFCS, whichever is the later date.

DFCS Professional Enhancement Scholarship Program Guidelines

If an employee resigns or is terminated for cause before the repayment period has been completed, the recipient is liable for repayment. The DFCS will withhold the payment of annual leave pay until the employee repays scholarship debts owed.