

TRAINING POLICIES

In accordance with House Bill 3337, 84th Legislature, Regular Session, state agencies must post training policies adopted under Texas Government Code, 656.102 on the employment section of the agency's Internet website.



Training

The Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) provides educational and other training opportunities for employees to increase their professional skills and abilities that are of direct benefit to the agency.

Should other special situations or training opportunities exist that do not correspond with the employees' specific job duties, a written request outlining the need for such training assistance may be submitted for consideration.

The TAHC will reimburse training for special license certification or recertification only if the agency or legislation requires the certification for the employee's position.

The TAHC may also provide assistance for outside seminars, workshops, or courses.

Training Requests

To request training, an employee will:

- complete a TAHC Training Request (Form 98-24); and
- attach literature about the outside seminar or conference to the Training Request and send it to his/her supervisor.
- Human Resources will submit the requisition in CAPPs for purchase and registration.

Training Registration

The agency's Purchasing Department will coordinate and process registration of employees attending outside seminars or conferences.

Training Records

The Human Resources Department will maintain all training records in the training files, including training records for career ladder movement.

Mandatory Training

The TAHC is committed to employee training and development. As part of the performance appraisal process, employee training and development needs are reviewed and discussed.

New Employee Orientation

All new TAHC employees will receive New Employee Orientation (NEO) in the Central Office to provide them with information about the TAHC, their responsibilities as employees of the agency, and additional required training through online courses, and instructor-led training courses.

Employees who do not complete the required Equal Employment Opportunity and Incident Command Structure training in the allotted time can be subject to disciplinary action.

All TAHC handbooks and policy manuals are located on the Intranet. Each department will develop the topics to be covered by new employees during the NEO. The purpose of NEO is to give new employees background information about the agency and to provide required computer and equipment training needed in their jobs.

EEO and Sexual Harassment Prevention Training

All new employees must complete EEO and Sexual Harassment Prevention Training via the intranet within the first thirty (30) days after hire. To ensure that this training is performed, the following procedure will be in place:

Field Personnel

New employees will sign the appropriate new-hire paperwork in the office and will then be provided with access instructions to complete the training. This must be accomplished within the first week of employment

New-hire paperwork sent to the Human Resources Office will include a signed certificate that indicates the new employee has completed the EEO training.

Central Office Personnel

- New employees will be given the EEO training access instructions when they are completing all necessary paperwork for employment.
- The employee will be instructed to complete the training within the first week of employment.
- Human Resources will follow up to ensure the training is completed.

Additionally, all current employees will receive EEO and Sexual Harassment Prevention Training every two (2) years through online training via the intranet or by instructor-led training, if available. If instructor-led training is available, the supervisors will be notified and employees may then choose whether they wish to take the training via instructor-led training or online.

The Human Resources Department will notify the employees when refresher training is required. The process for completing this training will be as follows:

- Human Resources will notify all supervisors that the training must be completed. All employees, even recently hired employees, will be required to complete the training during the timeframe allotted (one to two months).
- Supervisors will be instructed to collect their employees' completion certificates and forward them to Human Resources.
- Supervisors will be sent delinquency notices and their chains of command until all certificates are received.

Incident Command Structure (Emergency Response) Training

All employees will receive ICS 100, 200, and 700 training, which must be accomplished within 60 days of the employee's date of hire. New employees must complete ICS 800B within the first 180 days of employment with the agency. Employees who do not complete the required Incident Command Structure training in the allotted time can be subject to disciplinary action.

Safety Training

All current employees will receive safety training and Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) information during NEO. Additionally, safety training will be provided to employees on an annual basis.

Training to Keep Required Licenses

All positions requiring a license within the agency will acquire training sufficient to meet minimum Continuing Education Units (CEU) requirements.

Education Assistance

If funds are available, the TAHC may pay for college tuition and fees for college-level classes or other special training opportunities when it will directly benefit the agency and when the activity is directly related to an employee's job duties or career ladder. Each request will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Eligibility

Funds must be available for the tuition, and the employee must:

- be employed at least two (2) years with the TAHC before applying;
- be a regular, full-time employee;
- have had no disciplinary actions or leave without pay in the year prior to the request; and
- have abided by the terms of any previous education assistance granted by the TAHC.

Employees may lose eligibility for reimbursement if they separate from the agency before completing the class, if they fail to receive a passing grade for the class, if they receive any disciplinary action during the time the employee is attending class, or if their performance level falls below satisfactory during class attendance.

Time Off From Work

Employees are encouraged to attend classes, which take place outside of normal business hours. When this is not possible, an employee may request the use of personal leave to attend college courses. The time off must not adversely affect work activities of the department or division.

Required Educational Classes

A manager or supervisor may require an employee to take a specific class to enhance job efficiency or effectiveness. In such cases, the cost of tuition, fees, and books may be paid in full during class registration and time off from work may be allowed. No contractual agreement is required.

Tuition Reimbursement

An employee may request payment for college coursework tuition when the course is directly related to an employee's job duties or career ladder or is part of an employee degree plan that will benefit the agency. (If an employee enrolls in a private institution, reimbursement will be based on the tuition and fees charged by a public institution for the same or similar course(s). The reimbursement amount will be limited to tuition costs incurred by an in-area student of a state supported college or university.

The costs of fees and textbooks are the responsibility of the student employee and these costs will not be reimbursed by the agency.

Employee Responsibilities

The employee will submit a written Education Assistance Request (Form 99-04) to his/her supervisor for individual course(s) or a degree plan at least one (1) month before the course registration deadline to allow ample time to process the request.

Employees requesting tuition reimbursement must receive a grade of “C” or better in the course. Receiving a grade lower than “C” or receiving a disciplinary action will disqualify the employee for the tuition reimbursement, even if the tuition reimbursement request had been approved.

An employee requesting tuition reimbursement must sign a contractual agreement with the agency, which states that the employee will not voluntarily terminate employment from the agency until he/she has worked the same number of months as the educational assistance received. (For purposes of this policy, a semester means up to 6 college hours of credit and is equal to 6 months of employment.)

Example: Sarah Student received tuition reimbursement from the agency for 6 semesters of college. She is required to work for the agency for 36 months following the final tuition reimbursement payment made by the agency. If she voluntarily terminates employment after 18 months, she will be required to reimburse the agency for half of the tuition expenses paid to her.

Supervisor/Department Head Responsibilities

The supervisor/department head will review the request and approve if appropriate.

If the supervisor/department head does not approve the request, he/she will:

- inform the employee of his/her objective, non-discriminatory decision; and
- draft a memo describing the reasons for his/her disapproval and forward it to the Director of Human Resources for inclusion in the personnel file.

If the supervisor/department head approves the request, he/she will:

- review the request for benefits to the agency and work load (if personal leave is requested);
- determine the cost of tuition to be reimbursed (based on costs of a state-supported university for same/similar classes; and
- forward approved requests to the Human Resources Department.

Human Resources Department Responsibilities

- If the supervisor approves the request, the Human Resources Department will review the request for conformance to policy and forward the request to the appropriate Assistant Executive Director/ Executive Director, whichever is next in the chain-of-command.
- Once a request has completed the approval process, the Assistant Executive Director/Executive Director will notify the supervisor/department head of the approval. The supervisor/department head will notify the employee of approval and send the appropriate agreement form to the Human Resources Department for inclusion in the employee’s

personnel file (Education Assistance Agreement: Non-Degree Program (Form 99-05) or the Education Assistance Agreement: Degree Program (Form 99-06.)

- By signing this form, the employee acknowledges that he/she will not receive reimbursement until the course is complete, and he/she has provided the necessary documentation showing the grade received and the amount paid. By signing this form, the employee also acknowledges the voluntary resignation clause and agrees to reimburse the agency for tuition expenses incurred by the agency if the employee voluntarily resigns prior to working the required number of months.

Reimbursement Procedures

Within two (2) weeks of receiving an official grade, the employee will forward to the Human Resources Department:

- a copy of the approved Education Assistance Request (Form 99-04);
- an original grade report or transcript showing the grade received for the course; and
- an itemized receipt showing the cost of tuition for the course (credit card statements are not an acceptable form of receipt).

The Human Resources Department will confirm that the conditions of the Education Assistance Agreement have been met, and if they have been, will authorize the Financial Services Department to reimburse the employee for the course tuition and fees.

Career Ladders

The TAHC will provide structured career ladders reflecting the agency's business needs for Livestock Inspectors, Administrative Assistants and any other job classification deemed necessary by the Executive Director. These career ladders will benefit employee skill development by having well-defined career advancement opportunities and requirements.

Although the agency places a high priority on moving employees through career ladders, advancement is subject to the availability of funding.

The supervisors will discuss career ladders with employees whose positions are subject to career ladder advancement.

Not all positions lend themselves to a clearly defined career ladder, however, the supervisor and employee should discuss the employee's opportunities for advancement, also known as a career path. Employees occupying non-career ladder positions may receive merit pay increases, one-time merit payments and promotions through the merit and promotion process as staff become eligible for a merit/promotion and as budgetary funds are available.

Definitions

Career Ladder: A structured progression providing an employee with increasing levels of responsibility and pay based on performance, experience, education, acquisition of available knowledge, skills and abilities, as well as time in current level.

Job Analyses for Career Ladder Positions

Supervisors may submit proposals to change established career ladders. Such proposals must be submitted to the Human Resources Department for review and approval.

Employee Responsibilities

Movement through an established career ladder is neither mandatory nor automatic. Employees are responsible for:

- acquiring the additional knowledge, skills, and abilities associated with the position to which they are advancing;
- completing all required coursework, proficiency certifications, or information assessments of the respective career ladder;
- achieving at least an overall rating of "meets expectations" on their most current performance evaluation (evaluation must be within the past twelve (12) months);
- having no disciplinary or corrective action within the preceding twelve (12) months, or having any such action pending;
- meeting the time requirement established by the career ladder. Time in a level is not transferable from one career ladder series to another career ladder series unless specifically noted on the job description; and

- complying with agency rules, regulations, and policies; and
- submitting a written request to their first-line and second-line supervisors when they have met the requirements for advancement.

Career Ladder Review

Human Resources staff will review the minimum qualifications for each level on a career ladder as required. Human Resources, in conjunction with input from appropriate TAHC agency departments, may also revise established career ladders to ensure that the career ladder supports any changes in:

- the business needs of the agency;
- technical qualifications;
- positions' relationship to market conditions;
- the duties or developmental stages of employees; and
- the agency's mission.

The agency reserves the right to revise career ladders at any time.