

## Professional Development

<b>Reviewed Date</b>		<b>Number</b>	<i>HR0802</i>
<b>Revised Date</b>	<i>July 6, 2022</i>	<b>Approved Date</b>	<i>September 25, 1996</i>

### Purpose

Staff development is integral to, and essential for, the provision of quality service and achievement of agency strategic objectives. Continuing education can enhance an employee's ability to fulfill assigned duties. Attendance at professional meetings, conferences, team meetings and In-services also provide opportunities for networking, sharing, and learning from others.

### Policy

Subject to financial considerations, the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit supports health unit staff in professional development activities in order to promote excellence in program and service delivery. The responsibility for ongoing staff development is shared by the agency and the employee.

### Procedures

#### Budget

1. Health unit funds for staff development will be allocated equitably across departments. Sharing of conference or workshop costs with individual staff members and/or across departments may be necessary.
2. Each department will be responsible for allocating its staff development fund, taking into account:
  - agency priorities
  - program development and implementation priorities
  - priorities for skill development
3. A separate budget line, administered by Program Foundations and Finance Department, will be allocated to administrative support personnel, All Staff Education Days agency strategic planning and management training. Management training may also be addressed through department budgets to meet specific needs.

Where possible, In-service education is used to provide maximum benefit to staff in the most cost-effective way.

### Professional Development Activities

#### 1. In-service Education:

1. Content for In-services will be determined by a Department In-service Committee comprised of staff and management for department specific In-services and from staff and management for the agency All Staff Education Day committee. The purpose of an In-service is to expand knowledge and enhance specific skills and abilities pertinent to assigned responsibilities. Management has final approval of a department

In-service agenda and Executive Committee has final approval of content for All Staff Education Days.

2. Early in the planning process, management will review the proposed In-service topics with their respective Vice President (VP). If the VP hosting the In-service determines that the proposed topic may be of value to staff in other departments, or to potential audiences external to the health unit, the VP will share this with the members of the Executive Committee. Non-hosting VP's will determine, the potential number of staff from their department who might benefit from attending the In-service, and communicate back to the In-service hosting VP, therefore informing size of the venue required. The full scope of staff to be included will be provided an invitation early enough for them to make arrangements in their work schedule to be able to attend the department In-service.
3. Attendance from within the hosting department will be required depending on the nature of the In-service and specific department requirements.
4. Part-time, temporary, and casual staff will be paid time for attendance at In-services if attendance is recommended or required by the department management.
5. Part-time, temporary, and casual staff whose attendance is not recommended or required by department management may participate on their own time.
6. The above processes will also be followed in the development of educational events hosted by the health unit for external audiences, where the content may also be of educational value to health unit staff.

## **2. Workshops/Conferences/Seminars/Webinars:**

1. Requests to attend meetings, workshops, conferences, seminars, or webinars are considered on the basis of relevance to agency priorities, program priorities, staff development needs, employment status and available funds. Requests excluding no cost webinars are to be submitted on the Conference Approval Application and Expense Form HR0802 (F1) to the Direct Supervisor for consideration. Webinars that do not require travel or any cost shall be approved in advance by the Direct Supervisor by e-mail.
2. Hours paid per day to attend non mandatory meetings, workshops, conferences, or seminars including travel time to/from the event must be approved in writing or via email by the Direct Supervisor in advance of attending the event. Such paid approved time will not exceed seven (7) hours per day. An exception to the seven (7) hour maximum will be granted if a department VP requires mandatory attendance at the meeting, workshop, conference, or seminar. The decision regarding non-mandatory or mandatory attendance will be communicated in writing or email by the Direct Supervisor to the individual at the time the request is approved.
3. Requests to attend any of the above should be accompanied by the individual's identified learning objectives and a statement of how attendance at the event is expected to impact on the individual's performance of assigned duties or achievement of agency goals [form HR0802(F1), Conference Approval Application and Expense Form].
4. Requests to attend meetings, workshops, conferences, or seminars that provide education that is consistent with the requirements of the BFI Minimum Standards of Practice for Public Health Nurses providing breastfeeding care, support and assessment requires the check box titled "Breastfeeding Content" to be completed along with a copy of the Conference Approval Application and Expense Form

HR0802 (F1) to be sent to Human Resources by the Administrative Coordinator. Human Resources is then responsible to ensure the professional development activity is tracked in InfoHR.

5. Decisions regarding the extent of agency support granted will be based on available resources, degree to which the event relates to agency or department identified priorities, need for professional updating and an equitable distribution of staff development funds.
6. After attendance at a meeting, workshop, conference or seminar, the employee may be required to discuss with their Direct Supervisor the content, quality, and value of the event.

### **3. Educational Refund:**

Decisions regarding the extent of agency financial support granted for education will be based on available resources, degree to which the request relates to agency or department identified priorities, need for professional updating and an equitable distribution of staff development funds.

#### **3.1 Eligibility for Educational Refund**

- Full or part-time employees, who have completed the SMDHU probationary period and who are in good standing as determined by the health unit, taking into consideration their employment record.
- Individual has successfully completed the program/course specific to the Education Refund request. An exception is for academic research courses or thesis-type courses that may not be completed in one year. A single research or thesis-type courses may qualify for educational refund each year for up to three consecutive years.
- Ability to demonstrate how the course or program content will contribute to the agency mission, strategic objectives or department or program goals.

#### **3.2 Process for Education Refund Approval**

- a) Employee prepares a written request for educational assistance, specifying how the proposed course/program meets agency objectives and or department or program goals. The Direct Supervisor recommendations are appended to the education refund application. The VP may approve or not approve the educational refund.

#### **3.3 Limitations to Education Refund:**

No individual may receive more than \$1,000.00 per calendar year as Educational Refund.

- Subject to the above limit up to 100% of tuition fees for approved courses/programs are reimbursable.
- Subject to the above limit, up to 100% of course costs for approved home-study or web-based type schools, are reimbursable.
- Employees will not be reimbursed for costs of textbooks, laboratory supplies, tools instruments or supplies, even if required for the course of study.

- The use of health unit equipment or resources for professional development activities cannot disrupt the work of others in the agency.
- A passing grade is required for education refund with the exception of research courses or thesis-type courses that require more than one year of study prior to completion.
- Research or thesis-type courses that may not be completed within one year may qualify for reimbursement annually up to a maximum of three consecutive years.

### 3.4 Process for Refund

- a) The costs of the courses/programs will be paid initially by the employee.
- b) The employee submits the original tuition or course/program fee receipts and evidence of satisfactory completion of the course to their Direct Supervisor.
- c) The VP determines if reimbursement will be approved or not and advises the Direct Supervisor of the rationale who will in turn advise their employee.
- d) If approved the employee shall complete an Expense Report (see "Expense Reports" Policy) using the web-based expense reimbursement with uploaded receipts within a reasonable time frame after completion of their educational program. The expense will automatically be electronically forwarded to their Direct Supervisor for approval.
- e) The Direct Supervisor shall review the request and if acceptable, approve the expense/claim request in the web-based expense reimbursement system and it will then be automatically sent to the Vice President/MOH for final approval within the web-based expense system. Once approved by the Vice President/MOH the expense will automatically be sent to Finance for processing.
- f) Finance will arrange for an electronic funds transfer to the representative after receipt of the Vice President/MOH's authorization to reimburse.
- g) Reimbursement is limited to a maximum of \$1,000.00 per calendar year and all reimbursement claims for the previous calendar year must be submitted prior to February 1 of the current calendar year.
- h) Termination of employment prior to the completion of the course/program eliminates employee eligibility for refund payment.
- i) Educational refunds cover courses or programs undertaken by employees on off-duty hours only. This excludes health unit staff development programs which will be scheduled, as far as possible, during normal working hours. As funds for this program are limited, priorities in the interest of the overall health unit's programs and service will receive primary consideration in determining distribution of available funds.

### 3.5 Educational Record

A record, including grades, will be filed in the individual's Human Resources file along with other educational qualifications, so that this may be reviewed when the employee is considered for other positions.

## 4. Other

The health unit's policy is to fill vacancies from within from qualified applicants whenever possible. However, the fact that an employee utilized the Educational Refund Plan is not

a guarantee that the employee will receive a transfer to another type of work or promotion to a higher-level position since many factors, as well as educational preparation, must be considered

***Related Policies***

***Related Forms***

[HR0802\(F1\) – Conference Approval Application and Expense Form](#)

***Final Approval Signature:*** \_\_\_\_\_

Review/Revision History:

- September 2010 Policy re-numbered, previous number B3.200
- April 10, 2013: Revised
- November 27, 2013: Revised
- January 8, 2014: Revised
- May 30, 2016: Revised
- September 6, 2017: Revised
- July 6, 2022, VP Title