



**Maryland State Firemen's Association**

***Policies and Procedures***

**Tuition Reimbursement Incentive Program**

**Effective Date: June 18 2016 (& UPDATED: January 1, 2018)**

**POLICY**

It shall be the policy of the Maryland State Firemen's Association to maximize the retention of qualified active volunteer fire and rescue personnel through the use of a SAFER funded College Tuition Reimbursement Program for any active and in good standing member or their immediate family.

**The Tuition Reimbursement Program Dates for 2018**

- **Summer & Fall 2017 Semesters**
  - **Application Period Open:** February 1<sup>st</sup> to March 1<sup>st</sup>
  - **Decisions Made:** March 1<sup>st</sup> to March 20<sup>th</sup>
  - **Decision Letters Sent:** March 20<sup>th</sup> to March 31<sup>st</sup>
  - **Checks Mailed (awardees):** April 1<sup>st</sup> to April 15<sup>th</sup>
  
- **Winter & Spring 2018 Semesters**
  - **Application Period Open:** July 1<sup>st</sup> to August 1<sup>st</sup>
  - **Decisions Made:** August 1<sup>st</sup> to August 20<sup>th</sup>
  - **Decision Letters Sent:** August 20<sup>th</sup> to August 31<sup>st</sup>
  - **Checks Mailed (awardees):** September 1<sup>st</sup> to September 15<sup>th</sup>

All applications must be **received** within the timelines above for consideration.

Applications should be sent to Tyler C. Patton- MSFA Project Manager- **Tyler@UCVFD.Org**

**DEFINITIONS**

**Active Volunteer Personnel** – Fire department personnel that have earned a year of service under the Maryland State Tax subtraction modification program (also known as LOSAP in some counties)

**Tuition Reimbursement** – A payment (maximum of \$1,000.00 per semester) to qualified active volunteer personnel or their immediate family members for the expressed purpose of encouraging attendance and proper education and approved institutions of higher learning.

**Approved Institution of Higher Learning** – In general any institution that offers college level course.

**Full-time Student** – A student who is taking 12 or more credit hours in two or more consecutive semesters.

**Part-time Student** – A student who is taking 6 to 11 credit hours in two or more consecutive semesters.

**Casual Student** – a student who does not meet the definition of a Full-Time or Part-Time Student, a student taking less than 6 credit hours per semester in two or more consecutive semesters.

**Reimbursement Application** – An association produced application must be filed with the SAFER Grant Project Coordinator, stating all particulars regarding the request for reimbursement and identifying the level of eligibility for consideration.

**Transcript** – A transcript of courses, grades and semester credit hours for each course taken by the applicant.

**Sufficient Grade Point Average** – To qualify for tuition reimbursement, an applicant must show, via a school transcript from the Approved Institution of Higher Learning, a minimum of a C average or above for the course for which application is being presented for reimbursement.

**Official Receipt of Payment** – Proof of payment showing the cost of all courses for the period during which the request for consideration is being applied for.

**Appeal** – Applicants denied tuition reimbursement may appeal to the MSFA Oversight Committee within fifteen days of receiving denial of the reimbursement.

**Final Authority** – The SAFER Oversight Committee shall serve as the final authority for administration of the Tuition Reimbursement Program.

### **GENERAL INFORMATION**

Applicants **MUST** be current active members in good standing within their Fire Department. Applicant must show cause that they cannot afford the tuition for their child or themselves without having to take on a 2<sup>nd</sup> or greater job that would reduce or eliminate the time that they currently spend volunteering in the community.

Applicants or Applicants' family member must be a high school graduate or equivalent. Tuition Reimbursement is for any field of study at an accredited institution of higher learning. Students may only apply for two semesters per year. Students will not receive funding for a third semester in any given year.

A maximum of \$1,000 will be reimbursed to each qualified & approved recipient per semester, regardless of total funds expended by the student. Should there be insufficient applications, the SAFER Grant Project Manager reserves the right to provide additional reimbursement to qualified

recipients, upon approval of the Grant Oversight Committee, on a case by case basis, based upon participation and level of school activity.

The decision on funding Tuition Reimbursements shall be made per semester, within thirty (30) days following the submission window for each semester.

The amount of the award may not exceed the actual cost of tuition and fees charged for courses. When accepting money via the Tuition Reimbursement Program, recipients must sign a legal contract committing to the provision that the applicant active provider services for a period of one year following the award. In doing so, the recipient acknowledges that the failure to do so will result in a legal obligation to remit the exact amount of the reimbursement to the Maryland State Firemen's Association within ninety days of the end of the calendar year in which the recipient failed to meet stated requirements.

**Preference will be given to those applicants who:**

- **Have never benefited from the MSFA/MFCA SAFER funds previously.**
- **From different geographic areas of Maryland that have not received funding.**

This is a Tuition Reimbursement Program. Qualified recipients will only receive monies after successful completion of the semester for which funding is being requested and with proof of successful completion.

The Tuition Reimbursement Program is valid for School Years 2014 through Spring 2018.

**PROCEDURE**

Applicants must complete the Maryland State Firemen's Association Tuition Reimbursement Application (attached).

The application, along with required documentation, including transcript, receipt of payment for courses and proof of other consecutive semester enrollment shall be forwarded via email to the MSFA SAFER Grant Project Coordinator immediately upon completion of the semester.

Following verification of active status for the previous calendar year, the applicant being a member in good standing, and the applicable priority of: Full-Time, Part-Time or Casual Student; reimbursements will be decided on the criteria required by FEMA, the SAFER Award, and additional considerations made by the SAFER Oversight Committee

Applicants will be notified in writing of the decision of their application. If awarded, the amount that they will be receiving prior to final reimbursement. Payment will be mailed in accordance with SAFER payment timelines the following month.

**FUNDING & SUNSET**

Funding for this program is contingent upon a Federal SAFER Grant, for a period not to exceed four years. Should this funding be withdrawn or eliminated, this Program could be eliminated. The program will sunset with the expiration of the grant in September 2018. Spring 2018 will be the last semester awarded.