



State of Florida
Department of Children and Families

Rick Scott
Governor

Mike Carroll
Interim Secretary

DATE: August 4, 2014

TO: Regional Managing Directors
Community-Based Care Lead Agency CEOs

FROM: Pete Digne, Deputy Secretary
Janice Thomas, Assistant Secretary for Child Welfare

SUBJECT: Child Protection and Child Welfare Personnel Tuition Exemption Program

INFORMATIONAL MEMORANDUM

PURPOSE: This memorandum provides information regarding the Child Protection and Child Welfare Personnel Tuition Exemption Program and addresses how to request the exemption.

BACKGROUND: The Legislature during the 2014 session created section 402.403, Florida Statutes, to establish the **Child Protection and Child Welfare Personnel Tuition Exemption Program** for the purpose of recruiting and retaining high-performing individuals who are employed as child protection and child welfare personnel. For those personnel who meet the requirements of the program up to 6 credit hours of courses per term are exempt from the payment of tuition and fees at a state university.

For this program child protection personnel include the following:

- Child Protective Investigators (CPI);
- Sr. CPIs; and
- CPI Supervisors.

For this program child welfare personnel include the following:

- Case Managers; and
- Case Manager Supervisors.

Requirements of the Program include the following:

- Child protection personnel must be employed with the Department of Children and Families;
- Child welfare personnel must be employed by a community-based care lead agency or a subcontractor of a community-based care lead agency;
- Either personnel must be a high performing employee, completing job duties and responsibilities at an achievement rate established by their employer and reflected on their latest performance evaluation;

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Mission: Protect the Vulnerable, Promote Strong and Economically Self-Sufficient Families, and Advance Personal and Family Recovery and Resiliency

- Personnel must be admitted into a graduate-level social work program or graduate certificate program related to child welfare which is certified by the Council on Social Work Education;
- Personnel must take courses online if such courses are offered online; and
- Personnel must maintain at least a "B" (3.0) in all courses for which tuition and fees are exempted, and when a "B" is not achieved, must reimburse the university for the cost of the course.

Throughout the state, "high performing employee" is defined as achieving a minimum score of *at least 70%* of an employer's overall performance evaluation total. However, individual employers may set standards that exceed the 70% minimum requirement based on the agency's minimal "meets expectation" designation. For those individuals employed by the state, a minimum overall score of 3.5 must have been achieved on the employee's last performance evaluation to be eligible to participate in the Child Protection and Child Welfare Personnel Tuition Exemption Program.

For those individuals who participate in the tuition exemption program, the individual must remain employed by the Department, a state agency, or a contracted provider for 5 years after completion of the graduate level social work program. If employment ends before the 5-year period is fulfilled, the benefit shall be repaid to the university according to a pro rata calculation based on the number of years of service.

The Child Protection and Child Welfare Personnel Tuition Exemption Program Form has been included with this memorandum as an attachment and will also be available on the Florida's Center for Child Welfare website at:
<http://centerforchildwelfare.fmhi.usf.edu/LegislativeChanges/SB1666.shtml>.

ACTION REQUIRED: Please disseminate this memorandum and the attached Child Protection and Child Welfare Personnel Tuition Exemption Program Form to all child protection investigators and supervisors employed by the Department and all case managers and supervisors employed by Community-Based Care Lead Agencies and their subcontractors.

CONTACT INFORMATION: Additional information may be obtained by contacting Jane McElroy, Legislative and Budget Consultant, at jane_mcelroy@dcf.state.fl.us or (850)717-4671.

ATTACHMENTS: Child Protection and Child Welfare Personnel Tuition Exemption Program Request Form and a list of Community-Based Care Lead Agency Case Management Organization Subcontractors

cc: JoShonda Guerrier, Director of Child Welfare Strategic Projects
Traci Leavine, Director of Child Welfare Practice
Kellie Sweat Darnell, Director of Child Welfare Operations
Regional Family and Community Services Directors
Rebecca Kapusta, Interim General Counsel
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