Certification and Licensure Exam Fee Reimbursement Program

For PEF-Represented Employees

Program Guidelines

For the Period

April 1, 2013, through March 31, 2014

Governor's Office of Employee Relations

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Certification and Licensure Exam Fee Reimbursement Program (CLEFR)
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Certification and Licensure Exam Fee Reimbursement (CLEFR) Program

A Program to Reimburse Certification and Licensure Examination Fees
For PEF-Represented Employees

A. Program Description

The CLEFR Program reimburses the cost of examinations for first time certification and licensure of PEF-represented employees. Renewals of licenses and certifications that an employee obtained previously are not reimbursable. *This program does not cover fees for Civil Service exams, which may be reimbursed through PEF Membership Benefits*. (Please check the PEF website at www.pef.org under Membership Benefits or call PEF at 518-785-1900.)

B. Program Funding and Monitoring

Funding for the Certification and Licensure Exam Fee Reimbursement Program is provided through Article 15 of the 2011-2015 Agreement between the State of New York and the Public Employees Federation (PEF). Article 15 of the Agreement also establishes the Professional Development Committee (PDC) consisting of two designees from the Governor's Office of Employee Relations (GOER) and two designees from PEF. The PDC has adopted these program guidelines and monitors the administration of this program.

C. Certification and Licensure Exam Fee Reimbursement Program Highlights

- Provides reimbursement for the cost of examinations for first time certification and licensure of PEF-represented employees **for exams that occurred on or after April 1, 2013, through March 31, 2014.**
- Maximum reimbursement is $600 per fiscal year, which runs from April 1st through the following March 31st.
- Reimbursement requires a passing exam grade. CLEFR will not cover incomplete or failed exams.
- All CLEFR applications must be submitted within 90 days after the date of the exam.
- The IRS considers reimbursements under the Certification and Licensure Exam Fee Reimbursement Program taxable income. **The Office of the State Comptroller will withhold estimated taxes at the end of the calendar year.**

D. Employee Eligibility

At the time of registration, and upon successful completion of the exam, an employee must either

- Be actively employed in a PEF-represented position, and
- Be a New York State or Roswell Park employee with Attendance Rules coverage who is either full- or part-time (working 50% or more), and
- Have completed the 13 biweekly pay period qualifying period to earn and use annual leave (vacation),

<or>

- Be a New York State or Roswell Park employee, represented by PEF, who has been laid off in the past year, has not been rehired in a PEF-represented position, and is on the appropriate Civil Service or Roswell Park Preferred List. The exam start date should be within 12 months of your layoff date to be eligible for reimbursement. Documentation must be provided showing the date of layoff and preferred list standing. The documentation must be signed by a personnel officer and sent as an attachment with the supporting documentation required;

<or>

- Be a New York State or Roswell Park employee, represented by PEF, who is on full-time non-disciplinary leave without pay (must be documented with a letter from agency personnel or human resources director).

E. Exam Eligibility

Eligibility for exam reimbursement must comply with three requirements:

- The exam must be job-related or career-related.
- The exam must result in first-time certification or licensure for an occupation that currently exists in New York State service.
- The exam must be administered by an accredited body.

These three requirements are described more fully below:

1. **Job or Career-Related**

The exam must be job-related or career-related. The terms job-related and career-related are defined as follows:

A ***job-related*** exam is one that directly relates to the employee's current profession or job assignments, duties, and responsibilities.

A ***career-related*** exam is one that provides the employee with the knowledge, skills, or abilities to increase opportunity for career mobility and/or advancement within their current profession or in a career path for which there currently exists a need in New York State, such as nursing and accounting.

The PDC maintains sole discretion to make final determinations.

2. **Certification or Licensure**

The exam must result in first-time certification or licensure for an occupation that currently exists in New York State service. Examples would include, but are not limited to, the following:

- **Information Technology**: Exams for certification in specific software or hardware programs by manufacturers such as Microsoft, Novell, Oracle, etc.
- **Substance Abuse**: Credentialed Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Counselor written exams
- **Law**: New York State Bar exam
- **Finance**: Certified Public Accountant exam, Financial Planning exam
- **Nursing**: Certification in specific nursing disciplines such as Psychiatry, Forensics, etc.
- **Engineering**: Certification in specific engineering disciplines such as Storm Water Management

3. **Accreditation**

The exam must be administered by an accredited body. An accredited body is defined by one or more of the following:

- Chartered, approved, or authorized by the New York State Board of Regents, or an equivalent recognized body
- Licensed or registered by the New York State Education Department, or an equivalent recognized accrediting body
- Licensed, registered, or approved by a department or agency of the State of New York to provide specific certification or licensing exams
- Certified computer manufacturers, such as Microsoft or Oracle, and authorized third parties who administer classes and certification exams on software, hardware, and other related information technology equipment
- Nationally recognized professional associations, or their state or local chapters accredited to administer specific exams and award certification by the appropriate accrediting body

If your provider does not appear, you may request the institution be added on the application. See "Adding an Institution" on the resources tab of your dashboard.

F. Application Deadlines

All CLEFR applications must be submitted within 90 days after the date of the exam.

G. Maximum Reimbursement, Time Period, and Exam Grade

The Certification and Licensure Exam Fee Reimbursement (CLEFR) Program covers eligible expenses incurred from April 1, 2013, through March 31, 2014. An applicant can receive reimbursement(s) of up to $600 per fiscal year (April 1st through March 31st) during this period. The minimum reimbursement for CLEFR is $50. Applications for exams costing less than $50 will not be accepted. Employees working less than half-time will be reimbursed at a rate of 50 percent, not to exceed $300 per fiscal year.

The CLEFR Program provides reimbursement for the cost of examinations for first time certification and licensure of PEF-represented employees. Renewals of licenses and certifications an employee obtained previously are not reimbursable. The exam must be scored with a passing grade. The documentation of the exam result must accompany the application for reimbursement.

H. Amount of Reimbursement

There are two possible levels of maximum reimbursement for employees eligible to participate in this program.

- **Eligible full-time employees or part-time employees who are employed to work 50% or more** will be reimbursed for the full cost of each exam, not to exceed total reimbursement of $600 per fiscal year for the period April 1, 2013 – March 31, 2014. *For example: An eligible full-time employee has already received $400 and takes an exam with a fee of $300. This employee would receive only $200 in reimbursement toward the $300 exam fee, thus reaching the $600 maximum reimbursement available under the program.*

- **Eligible employees who work less than 50% and those on full-time non-disciplinary leave without pay** will be reimbursed 50% of the cost of each exam, not to exceed total reimbursement of $300 per fiscal year for the period April 1, 2013 – March 31, 2014. F*or example: An eligible employee employed to work less than 50% takes an exam with a fee of $300. This employee has already taken exams during the eligibility period and has received reimbursement of $200. Since the employee is entitled to 50% reimbursement, the normal reimbursement for the $300 fee would be $150. Because the employee has already received $200, this person would now only be eligible for $100 of the $150, to bring their total reimbursement to $300.*

For purposes of this program, employees participating in a Voluntary Reduction in Work Schedule (VRWS) agreement are deemed to be full-time employees. Eligible employees who are on a Civil Service or Roswell Park preferred list will be reimbursed in accordance with either bullet under Section D. above depending upon their employment at the time they were laid off.

The employee's status during the pay period in which the exam was taken will determine the applicable reimbursement rate.

I. Reimbursement Eligibility

To be eligible for reimbursement all of the following conditions must be met:

- The applicant must meet the employee eligibility criteria described in Section D above.
- The exam must comply with the exam eligibility criteria described in Section E above.
- The exam must be taken within the time period described in Section G above.
- The exam grade must be passing as described in Section G above.
- The minimum reimbursement amount is $50. Applications seeking less than $50 will not be processed.
- Where an eligible employee, by virtue of experience and training, is permitted to seek evaluation of credentials in lieu of an examination reimbursement of fees paid for this evaluation will be permitted provided that such evaluation leads to initial certification or licensure in New York State and that all other requirements of this program are met. Future examinations for renewals of this license or certification will not be reimbursed under this program (see Section J "Costs and Fees NOT Reimbursed").

J. Costs and Fees NOT Reimbursed

Costs and fees not reimbursed by this Program include, but are **not** limited to:

- Fees for renewals of existing Licenses and Certifications whether by application or re-examination
- Civil Service exam fees
- Fees for exams leading to certification in a career that does not exist in New York State service
- Fees for exams leading to college credit for life experience
- Exam fees less than $50

- Academic and application fees
- Study material (books, CDs, DVDs, etc.) and supplies
- Real Estate licenses and certifications
- Licensure or certification processing fees

K. Application and Reimbursement Process

Applications for the Certification and Licensure Exam Fee Reimbursement Program are now submitted online directly through GOER's PSTP Online Application (PSTP OA) System. This system results in faster application processing. Complete a separate application for each exam. Applications with exam dates that differ from the date shown on the documentation will not be accepted. **For employees who do not have access to the Internet, contact GOER at 518-474-6612 for a paper application.**

Step 1: Log on to Public Service Training Program Online Application (PSTP OA).

Register for a GOER account at (http://www.goer.ny.gov/Training_Development/PEF/CertLicenseExamFee/index.cfm). Once an account has been established, sign-in each time you wish to access your account.

Step 2: Complete an online application:

- Sign on to your dashboard and select the applications tab.
- Click on the Exam Fee application tab to bring up that specific application.
- Follow the instructions. All required fields must be completed to successfully submit an application. Information circle links have been provided if assistance is needed when completing individual fields of the application. Applications must be submitted within 90 days after the date of the exam.
- Attach supporting documentation to your application. The documentation can be attached by clicking the 'Add Supporting Documentation' link and selecting a Word or PDF version of a scanned or downloaded document. The documentation must include all of the following:
    a. An unaltered invoice, receipt, or online account summary from the exam provider, showing the registration cost, and date of the exam; and
    b. Documentation from the exam provider showing you successfully passed the exam.

  All supporting documentation must be submitted within 30 days from the submission of your application.
- If you are unable to attach your documentation to your online application, you may send the documentation separately via certified U.S. mail within 30 days from submission of your application to:

  NYS Governor's Office of Employee Relations
  PSTP Reimbursement Unit
  2 Empire State Plaza, 7th Floor
  Albany, NY 12223

  Please be sure to retain a copy of all documentation for your records.
- Submit the completed application. **A successfully completed application will yield a confirmation number in a pop up box.** The confirmation number must accompany all documentation and/or correspondence relating to this application.

Applications can be submitted but cannot be approved for reimbursement without the supporting documentation.

Step 3: Check application status

It is important that you check your email and the 'Notifications & Alerts' area of your Online Application (OA) dashboard.

- Notification of Receipt – Notification will automatically be sent to the applicant that their application has been received and is being reviewed.
- Notification of Hold – Applicants will receive notification when additional information is needed or, when supporting documentation has not been received.
- Notification of Rejected or Denied Application – Applicants will receive notification when an application has been denied and the reason.
- Notification of Approval – Applicants will receive notification that the application is being processed for payment.

Applicants can review current status of their applications at any time on their dashboard. Details regarding each status can be found on the resources tab on your Online Application (OA) dashboard.

Step 4: Receive Reimbursement

Once an application has been approved, reimbursement checks will be mailed from the Office of the State Comptroller to the employee's home approximately four to six weeks **after** applicants receive notification that payment is being processed. This check will look very similar to a paycheck or travel expense check and is not automatically deposited.

NOTE: The Certification and Licensure Exam Fee Reimbursement Program does not include an appeal process.

L. Taxation of Certification and Licensure Exam Fee Reimbursements

The IRS considers reimbursements under the Certification and Licensure Exam Fee Reimbursement Program taxable income. **The Office of the State Comptroller will withhold estimated taxes at the end of the calendar year.**

The Governor's Office of Employee Relations (GOER) and the State of New York provide equal access to its programs for all persons and is an equal opportunity employer. It is our policy to maintain an academic and work environment free of discrimination and harassment against any person on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, genetic characteristics or information, political beliefs, status as a victim of domestic violence, and veteran, marital or family status or any other discrimination prohibited by law. Harassment of any individual will not be tolerated.

Reasonable accommodations are available, upon request, in all aspects of state training, consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act and the New York State Human Rights Law, to ensure that every individual is able to gain maximum benefit from the training experience.