

Certification and Licensure Exam Fee Reimbursement Program

for PEF-Represented Employees

Program Guidelines

**for the Period
April 1, 2014 through March 31, 2015**



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 Certification and Licensure Exam Fee Reimbursement (CLEFR) Program reimburses the cost of examinations for first time certification and licensure of PEF-represented employees. Examination fees to renew licenses and certifications previously obtained by an employee are not reimbursable. *This program does not cover fees for Civil Service exams. Some exams may be reimbursed through PEF Membership Benefits.* (Check the PEF website at www.pef.org under Membership Benefits or call PEF at 518-785-1900.)

B. Funding and Oversight of CLEFR

Funding for the CLEFR 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 also establishes the Professional Development Committee (PDC) that consists of two designees from the Governor's Office of Employee Relations (GOER) and two from PEF. The PDC has adopted these program guidelines and monitors the administration of this program.

C. CLEFR 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, 2014 and run through March 31, 2015.**
- Maximum reimbursement is \$600 per fiscal year, which runs from April 1st through March 31st of the following year.
- 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

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

Current PEF-Represented Employees

At the time of registration, and upon successfully completing the exam, an employee must:

- be actively employed in a PEF-represented position; and
- be a New York State or Roswell Park Cancer Institute employee with attendance rules coverage who is either full- or part-time (working 50 percent or more).

Laid Off Employees

A New York State or Roswell Park Cancer Institute employee is eligible for reimbursement if the applicant:

- has been laid off in the past year; and
- 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 must be within 12 months of the layoff date to be eligible for reimbursement. The applicant must provide documentation showing the layoff date and preferred list standing. It must be signed by a personnel officer and sent as an attachment with other supporting documentation.

Half-Time Employees and Employees on Full-Time Non-Disciplinary Leave

A New York State or Roswell Park Cancer Institute employee, represented by PEF, who works less than 50 percent, and those on full-time non-disciplinary leave, shall receive 50 percent of the benefit **with proper documentation**. Documentation must specify the start and end dates and reason for the leave. It also must show the employee's bargaining unit, agency code, and appointment date (date of initial appointment to state service). The documentation must be signed by a personnel officer and sent as an attachment with other supporting documentation.

Seasonal Employees, Student Interns, and Student Assistants

Seasonal employees, student interns, and student assistants are **not** eligible for this benefit unless they are entitled to earn vacation accruals prior to the start date of the course or event. Such employees must provide documentation of their eligibility to earn and use vacation accruals. It must be signed by a personnel officer and sent as an attachment with other supporting documentation.

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 license or certification must be awarded by an eligible provider.

1. Job-Related or Career-Related

The exam must be job-related or career-related as defined below.

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

A **career-related** exam 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 is needed in New York State government, such as nursing and accounting.

The PDC maintains sole discretion for making the final determination on whether an exam is eligible for reimbursement. Documentation may be requested from the applicant's supervisor to assist in determining eligibility.

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 include, but are not limited to:

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

3. Provider Eligibility

The license or certification must be awarded by an eligible provider who 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 the provider does not appear in the drop down list on the application form in the Public Service Training Program Online Application (PSTP OA) System, a request may be submitted to add it. See "Adding an Institution" in the Quick Tips document located on the program website.

F. Application Time Period and Deadline

CLEFR covers eligible expenses incurred from April 1, 2014 through March 31, 2015. All CLEFR applications must be submitted within 90 days after the date of the exam.

G. Release Time

CLEFR provides reimbursement for the cost of examinations for first time certification and licensure of PEF-represented employees. **It does not entitle an employee to receive release time.**

H. Expenses Covered

Eligible employees will be reimbursed for the cost of examinations for first time certification and licensure. 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 the evaluation leads to initial certification or licensure in New York State and all other program requirements are met.

I. Expenses Not Covered

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

- fees for renewing or maintaining existing licenses and certifications whether by application or re-examination
- any fees that are not part of the examination fee (application, processing, academic fees, shipping fees)
- study material (books, CDs, DVDs) and supplies
- Civil Service exam fees
- fees for exams leading to certification in a career that doesn't exist in New York State service
- fees for exams leading to college credit for life experience
- real estate licenses and certifications

J. Minimum and Maximum Reimbursement

The minimum reimbursement for CLEFR is \$50. Applications for exams costing less than \$50 will be denied. An applicant can receive reimbursements of up to \$600 per fiscal year.

K. Alternative Sources of Financial Assistance

If the applicant receives financial assistance from any source, **the source and amount must be reported on the CLEFR application and the paid invoice or a separate list.** This amount **must be subtracted from the total.** An employee who fails to report the amount of assistance must repay the overpayment. These participants may be excluded from participating in future programs.

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.**

M. Application and Reimbursement Process

Applications for the CLEFR Program are submitted online through GOER's PSTP OA System. A separate application must be completed for each exam. All information contained on the application must be true, accurate, and verifiable by supporting documentation. Failure to comply with the guidelines may result in denial of benefits or a penalty imposed for future benefits. **Employees who do not have access to the Internet can 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, applicants can sign-in whenever they want to access their account.

Step 2: Complete an online application

- **Turn off the pop up blocker to certify the application submission and receive a confirmation number.**
- Applications must be submitted within 90 days after the date of the exam.
- Sign on to the PSTP OA System and select the Applications tab.
- Click on the Exam Fee tab to bring up that specific application.
- Follow the instructions. All required fields must be completed to successfully submit an application. Information circle links are beside each field to clarify what is needed.
- Attach supporting documentation by clicking the 'Add Supporting Documentation' link. Select a Word or PDF version of a scanned or downloaded document. Documentation must include:
 - a. an unaltered invoice, receipt, or itemized account summary from the exam provider showing the registration cost (Bank or credit card statements will not be accepted.)
 - b. documentation showing the date of the exam (month, day, and year)
 - c. documentation from the exam provider indicating successful passing of the exam (License or certificate will not be accepted.)
- All supporting documentation must be submitted within 30 days from submitting the application.
- Applicants having difficulty attaching documentation may mail them via certified U.S. mail within 30 days of submitting their online application to:

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

- Applicants should retain a copy of all documentation for their records.
- Submit the completed application. **A successfully completed application will yield a confirmation number in a pop up box.** That 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 applicants check their email and the 'Notifications & Alerts' area of their PSTP OA System.

- Notification of Receipt — Notification will automatically be sent that the application has been received and is being reviewed.
- Notification of Hold — Applicants will be notified when additional information is needed or supporting documentation has not been received.
- Notification of Rejected or Denied Application — Applicants will be notified when their application has been denied and why.
- Notification of Approval — Applicants will be notified that their application is being processed for payment.

Applicants can review the current status of their applications at any time by selecting the 'Current Fiscal Year Apps' section of the PSTP OA System.

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 are notified that their payment is being processed. This check will resemble 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.

The Governor's Office of Employee Relations (GOER) provides equal access to its programs for all persons and is an equal opportunity provider and employer. It is the policy of GOER 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, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, genetic information, and veteran, marital or family status, political beliefs, or reprisal. Harassment of GOER program participants, trainers, or staff will not be tolerated.

Reasonable accommodations are available in all aspects of state training consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act to ensure that every individual is able to gain maximum benefit from their training experience. To request a reasonable accommodation, requests should be submitted to an individual's agency training representative or HR office when signing up for training.