

# **POLICY**

## **MICHIGAN NATIONAL GUARD STATE TUITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

### **Reference:**

Public Act No. 259 of 2014

### **General:**

State Tuition Assistance may be provided for voluntary off-duty education programs in support of Soldiers' and Airmen's professional and personal self-development goals. The State Tuition Assistance Program is directly related to retaining quality Soldiers and Airmen, enhancing their career progression, increasing the combat readiness of the Michigan National Guard, and returning Soldiers and Airmen to civilian careers.

Commanders at all levels are encouraged to use the State Tuition Assistance Program as a retention tool, to encourage Soldiers and Airmen to remain satisfactory participants, and meet their military obligations.

The Adjutant General is responsible for overall policies, guidance, administration, implementation and proper utilization of the Michigan State Incentives Program.

The MING-G/J1 is charged with validating the program for the Adjutant General and is the official designee of the Adjutant General for such purposes. Further sub-delegation of authority may be granted to the Army National Guard Education Services Officer (ESO).

The Recruiting and Retention Battalion Commander (Army) and the State Recruiting and Retention Superintendent (Air) are responsible for promoting the State Tuition Program as a recruiting and retention tool utilizing the incentives offered by the State Tuition Assistance Program.

Commanders at all levels are responsible for keeping members of their commands informed of the State Tuition Assistance Program. Commanders must continue to monitor eligibility of members who are receiving state incentives.

### **Rate of Reimbursement:**

The State Tuition Assistance Program will reimburse all or a portion of the tuition and fees for Soldiers and Airmen enrolled in an educational institution during the Soldiers' and Airmen's off-duty periods up to \$250 per semester hour, \$167 per quarter hour, or \$16.66 per clock hour, up to an annual cap of \$4,500 per fiscal year. The fiscal year begins on October 1<sup>st</sup> and ends on September 30<sup>th</sup>. In no case will State Tuition reimbursement exceed 100% of the actual tuition and approved fees, less any other Federal education benefit paid directly to the school.

**Duplication of Benefits:**

State Tuition Assistance may be combined with Federal Tuition Assistance; the combined amount cannot exceed the total cost of the course. The State Tuition Assistance Program is paid on a course-by-course basis.

The State Tuition Assistance Program may be used in conjunction with GI Bill Programs, provided the Soldiers and Airmen are otherwise qualified.

When using Federal Tuition Assistance, Federal Tuition Assistance will be applied first. The State Tuition Assistance Program will be applied to the remaining balance of financial need. Federal and State Tuition Assistance shall be applied before Pell Grants.

The State Tuition Assistance Program is not authorized for courses previously taken regardless of whether they were completed successfully or not.

**Authorized Uses:**

The State Tuition Assistance Program is limited to no more than one credential from each of the following levels:

1. Training Program,
2. Certificate Program,
3. Associate Degree,
4. Baccalaureate (undergraduate) Degree, including minors. Double majors are not authorized unless they are part of a documented degree plan,
5. Master's or first Professional Degree.

**Eligible Institutions:**

Soldiers and Airmen may be authorized to use the State Tuition Assistance Program at any eligible educational institution, such as a public or private college, university, vocational school, technical school, or trade school located in this state. The exception to this is allowing Airmen pursuing an approved on-line degree program through the Air University General Education Mobile (GEM) or Associate to Baccalaureate Cooperative (ABC) programs until such time that the programs are offered by a Michigan-based institution to use the State Tuition Assistance Program.

**Eligible Courses:**

The State Tuition Assistance Program is intended to culminate in vocational or technical training, a certificate, or the student's first associate's degree, bachelor's degree or master's degree or first professional degree. Reimbursement is authorized for courses that are listed on the student's degree plan.

1. Courses taken on-line or on campus at any eligible institution located in this state or off-duty courses taken through the Air University,
2. Undergraduate courses completed with a grade of "C" or higher on a 4.0 scale,
3. Vocational, technical or trade school must submit the pass/fail documentation or a certificate of completion provided at the end of the course.
4. Courses a student is currently attending at the time of direct commission (AMEDD/Chaplain/JAG Corps Officers) into the MNG,
5. Courses which start after their Pay Entry Basic Date (PEBD) and end prior to the Service Members Expiration Term of Service (ETS) date.
6. Remedial courses are authorized for reimbursement if they are included in the student's documented degree plan or other supporting documentation.

**Ineligible Courses:**

Reimbursement is not authorized for:

1. Courses that were not completed,
2. MOS/AFSC and/or mission-required military training courses,
3. Courses of all types for which instruction is available through the Army e-learning portal, unless the course is a requirement for a college degree,
4. Exam Prep Courses (e.g., GRE, GMAT),
5. Courses that earn Continuing Education Units (CEUs – may be paid thru other funding sources),
6. Courses for which the soldier or airmen did not request TA through the GoArmyEd portal by the deadline.
7. Certification courses provided by proprietary institutions.

If a student receives a tuition waiver (no tuition paid by the student or the fee statement indicates no tuition charges), reimbursement is not authorized. Examples include, but are not limited to: 1) high school students who attend post-secondary coursework, where the courses are paid for by the high school, school district, or state; 2) college students who have no cost incurred for tuition costs.

### **Ineligible Fees & Costs:**

Fees levied by institutions not required for enrollment in a given course including:

1. Parking privileges (can be paid only if charged as a condition of registration),
2. Nonrefundable charges. Covered fees must be refundable to the same extent as tuition, in accordance with the institution's tuition refund policy. As a minimum, all tuition and fees must be 100 percent refundable at least up to the start of the course,
3. Matriculation fees,
4. Graduation fees,
5. Transcript fees,
6. Medical services (Student Health Center fees can be paid only if charged as a condition of registration),
7. Activity fees, computer user fees, books, room and board expenses, and other school related fees.
8. Any other fees not an absolute requirement for enrollment in a given course/term,
9. Evaluation of portfolio/transcription for credit,
10. Courses for which the Soldier or Airmen did not request TA through the GoArmyEd portal by the deadlines outlined AR 621-5 (Army only),
11. Certification courses provided directly by proprietary institutions,
12. Payment of certification examinations,
13. Courses sponsored by continuing education departments yielding CEUs (or equivalent) that cannot be used towards degree/certificate completion,
14. Preparatory courses for college/graduate admissions testing such as the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT), Graduate Record Examination (GRE), Law School Aptitude Test (LSAT),
15. Courses of all types for which instruction is available through the Army e-learning portal, unless the course is a requirement for a college degree,
16. Programs where TA cannot be authorized on a course-by-course basis; for example, where pricing is for the entire program.

### **Maximum Lifetime Benefit:**

The maximum lifetime benefit under the State Tuition Assistance program is funding for 144 semester hours of undergraduate credit or a baccalaureate degree, whichever comes first. Soldiers and Airmen may use up to 42 hours of graduate credit of a master's or first professional degree, whichever comes first. Post-Bachelors credit toward a certificate program will count against the graduate credit limit.

### **Deadlines:**

Soldiers and Airmen must submit their application for State Tuition Assistance to the State Operations Budget Office no earlier than 60 calendar days before and no later than 14 calendar days after the course start date. Soldiers and Airmen must submit their request for reimbursement to the State Operations Budget Office no later than 45 calendar days after the course end date.

**Eligibility:****General (FTA eligible)**

All Soldiers and Airmen currently in good standing; AGR Soldiers and Airmen pursuant to Title 10 and Title 32; drilling Reserve Component Soldiers and Airmen coded as “Satisfactory Participant”. Soldiers and Airmen in ING or IRR status are ineligible for State Tuition Assistance.

Members receiving Federal Benefits which pay tuition costs directly to the institution are eligible to receive funds under the State Tuition Assistance program. The combination of Federal Benefits and the State Tuition Assistance Program cannot exceed 100% of the tuition costs, not to exceed the maximum cap of each program.

**Satisfactory Participant:**

A satisfactory participant of the Michigan National Guard is defined as a Service Member who meets the following criteria:

1. Is an active drilling member of his/her unit of assignment or attachment,
2. Has no more than four (4) periods of unexcused absence within the last 12 months,
3. Is not under suspension of favorable actions (Army) or adverse administrative actions (Air) in accordance with applicable regulation and policy,
4. Has a passing and current Army Physical Fitness Test (Army), Physical Fitness Test (Air), and Ht/Wt (Army/Air) test.

The service member must be a satisfactory participant at the time of application.

**Flags Resulting in Suspension:**

Soldiers and Airmen flagged for any of the following are ineligible for the State Tuition Assistance Program until the flag is lifted. They will regain eligibility for the State Tuition Assistance Program on the day after all flags are lifted.

1. Adverse action
2. Involuntary separation or discharge (field initiated)
3. Removal from a selection list (field initiated)
4. Referred DA Form 67-9 or Relief for Cause DA Form 2166-8
5. Security violation
6. Removal from a selection list
7. Drug abuse adverse action
8. Alcohol abuse adverse action
9. Involuntary separation or discharge
10. Lautenberg Amendment violation
11. Lack of Family Care Plan
12. Failure to obtain or maintain required license, certification, and/or registration
13. Noncompliance with 10 USC 10206, Members: physical examinations
14. Punishment phase
15. Physical Fitness Test failure
16. Height/Weight failure

**Suspension of Eligibility:**

Soldiers and Airmen who are not satisfactorily fulfilling their military obligations but have not been discharged or separated will have all State Tuition Assistance payments immediately suspended. This will occur when the unit commander initiates a flag, Suspension of Favorable Personnel Actions for one of the offenses listed within this section or charges a Soldier or Airman with (4) unexcused absence(s) within the last 12 calendar months.

If the Soldier or Airman's conduct is corrected and/or satisfactory participation is resumed, the suspension will be lifted. This is accomplished by the unit commander removing the flag. Once the Soldier or Airman returns to good standing, payments will be resumed; retroactive payments are authorized within 90 calendar days of the course end date. However, they must have requested reimbursement within the 45 calendar days after the course end date to meet the deadline.

Soldiers and Airmen must maintain a cumulative GPA of 2.0 on a 4.0 scale for undergraduate courses in order to retain eligibility for the State Tuition Assistance Program. Service members whose GPA is below the minimum cumulative GPA may include a memorandum for record explaining the circumstances that resulted in a low GPA with their State Tuition Assistance application. The approval authority for all grade overrides is the Michigan National Guard Education Services Officer.

**Termination of Eligibility:**

A Soldier or Airman's eligibility for State Tuition Assistance will be terminated if the Soldier or Airman:

1. Transfers to the National Guard of another state, to the United States Army Reserve or enlists into active military duty,
2. Is found to be medically unfit prior to completion of current semester, training or certificate program. In order to receive funds from the State Tuition Assistance Program, they must submit an exception to policy and have it approved.

**Service Obligation:**

Soldiers and Airmen who use the State Tuition Assistance Program will not incur an additional service obligation. Only courses that start after a Soldier or Airman's PEBD or end prior to a Soldier or Airman's ETS are eligible for the State Tuition Assistance Program.

**Incomplete/Failing Grades:**

The State Tuition Assistance program will not reimburse any portion of a Soldier or Airman's tuition for any courses that are not successfully completed. Non-successful grades for undergraduate work are defined as an "D", "E", or "F" on a 4.0 scale. Non-successful grades are also defined as unresolved incomplete grades after 90 days from the course end date.

If the student has an incomplete course, the Soldier or Airman should still request payment for other completed classes for that course/term within the 45 calendar day suspense. Upon

completion of the coursework, Soldiers and Airmen are eligible to request reimbursement for only the courses that were originally incomplete but are now complete. This request must be accompanied by a grade report showing satisfactory completion.

**Exception to Policy requests:**

When extenuating circumstances exist, a request for exception to policy may be initiated in writing by the Soldier or Airman and endorsed by his/her chain of command to the Michigan Army National Guard Education Services Office. The request must clearly explain the circumstances that may merit an exception to policy. Some examples may include deployment issues, State Active Duty issues, military training conflicts that result in missed suspense's or delays, or medical issues that disrupt civilian education.

The approval authority for all Exception to Policy requests is the Michigan National Guard Education Services Officer.

**Fraud, Waste, and Abuse:**

The submission of a falsified grade report, transcript, final fee statement, fraudulent application form or an attempt to receive funds to which a member is not due will result in termination with recoupment and suspension from the State Tuition Assistance program for a minimum of one year. A Service Member who received State Tuition Assistance funds utilizing a falsified grade report, transcript, final fee statement or fraudulent application may be subject to prosecution under the Michigan Code of Military Justice or the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

Recoupments will be processed in accordance with DMVA policies and procedures and may include tax refund intercepts.