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Vocational Rehabilitation and Vocational Assistance – Training Expenses

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Purpose

This policy provides direction concerning the payment of training related expenses associated with a person's participation in a rehabilitation or vocational assistance plan.

Policy

Definitions

1. **Training**: includes any vocational, technical, apprenticeship or academic learning or testing for which credit or certification may be granted by a training institution.

2. **Training Facility**: includes any location that may be designated by a training institution for training to take place other than at the home of the participant.
3. **Training Institution**: includes any nationally, provincially or territorially recognized or accredited institution, school, organization or authority that provides training.
4. **Vocational Training Plan (VTP)**: a document that outlines the vocational training and related expenses that are needed to support a person in achieving an appropriate occupational goal identified in their rehabilitation plan. The VTP is typically one component of a person's rehabilitation or vocational assistance plan. For further information on the VTP or an appropriate occupational goal, see the Rehabilitation Services and Vocational Assistance Plan: Assessments, Development and Implementation
5. **Training Period:** the period of time during which the participant is actively engaged in training. For example, a two-year program may consist of two 8-month training periods.

Training and Training Related Expenses

6. Where a person has a need for training to achieve an appropriate occupational goal, training may be authorized in the vocational component of the Rehabilitation Plan. Where a person has a need for an expense related to the training identified in the VTP, the expense may be authorized for payment under paragraph 15.(1)(a) of the *Veterans Well-being Regulations* (*VWR*).
7. When developing a VTP, consideration must be given to the principles and factors prescribed in sections 8 and 9 of the *Veterans Well-being Regulations*.
8. Section 8 of *the Veterans Well-being Regulations* requires that the following principles must be considered when developing a rehabilitation or vocational assistance plan:
    a. that the provision of services be focused on addressing the needs of the person;
    b. that the provision of services involve family members to the extent necessary to facilitate the rehabilitation;
    c. that the services be provided as soon as possible;
    d. that the services be focused on building the previous education, skills, training and experience of the participant; and
    e. that services provided not be focussed solely on the person's military occupation.
9. Section 9 of the *Veterans Well-being Regulations* requires that the following factors be considered when developing a rehabilitation or vocational assistance plan :
    a. the potential for improvement to a person's physical, psychological and social functioning, employability and quality of life;
    b. the need for family members to be involved in the provision of services;
    c. the availability of local resources;
    d. the motivation, interest and aptitudes of the participant;
    e. the cost effectiveness of the plan; and
    f. the duration of the plan.
10. These principles and factors are important for preparing a rationale to approve or not to approve certain training related expenses. For example, while a person may want to take training in another province, factor 9.c) suggests that training should be accessed locally if available. However, if the out-of-province program can be completed more quickly and hence shorten the duration of the VTP, a rationale could be made to approve the out-of-province program based on factor 9.f).

Expenses Required by the Training Institution

11. "Required by the training institution" means that the training institution has identified the expense as necessary for participation in the training program, but the expense is either not supplied by the training

institution or is supplied by the training institution with an associated fee.

12. Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) may pay the expenses required by the training institution which include but are not limited to the expenses described below:
    a. Tuition fees;
    b. Books including e-books and usage fees to access online databases or documents;
    c. Computers and related peripheral equipment including such items as a mouse, keyboard, printer, and the cost of setup. Hardware and system upgrades may also be authorized for a person who owns a computer that does not meet course specifications;
    d. Software including system or application software;
    e. Safety equipment and special clothing including such items as protective clothing, safety footwear, breathing apparatus, flotation clothing, or scuba gear;
    f. Tools, including such items as hammers, saws, measurement devices, chef's knives, laboratory instruments and hand held power tools;
    g. Other costs that may be required by the training institution, including the following:
        i. application fees;
        ii. transcript costs;
        iii. student fees;
        iv. student union fees;
        v. library usage fees;
        vi. laboratory fees;
        vii. security clearances; and
        viii. campus facilities and locker fees.

Examination and Licensing Fees

13. VAC may pay for examination fees which include those required to acquire the necessary certification or credentials needed to achieve the person's occupational goal. For example, following the completion of an apprenticeship program, a person may need to complete examinations to achieve Red Seal Accreditation in that occupation.
14. Licensing fees may be paid when a license is required for a student to participate in a cooperative or other work placement. VAC will not pay for annual licensing fees that are to be paid to practice or work in a vocation or profession after training is completed.

Internet Access

15. VAC may pay fees for Internet access, including installation costs. Ongoing maintenance or repair is the responsibility of the participant.
16. Unless otherwise required, internet fees cover basic high speed service. In cases where participants choose to purchase a bundle or package of services (for example, internet and television for one total price), VAC may pay the portion that would have been paid for internet had the participant not bundled the services.

School Supplies

17. VAC may pay for school supplies including such consumable items as paper, pens, highlighters, ink cartridges, binders and staples.

Tutoring

18. VAC may pay for tutoring as needed to assist the participant to meet training objectives, based on a written recommendation by the training institution, program instructor or vocational rehabilitation specialist.

Daily Transportation

19. VAC may pay for the applicable costs associated with daily commuting to the training facility during the training period as follows:
    a. when a participant uses a private vehicle, at a rate equal to the greater of:
        i. 15 cents per kilometre; and
        ii. the applicable lower kilometric rate as set out in Appendix A of the Commuting Assistance Directive published by the National Joint Council of the Public Service of Canada.
    b. when public transport is used, the cost of such transport, including such public transport costs as:
        i. rail, ferry, bus, subway or taxi fares or passes;
        ii. road and bridge tolls; and
        iii. park and drive services.

Parking

20. VAC may pay the cost of a parking pass or permit at or near the training facility.
21. Parking costs should only be paid while needed during the training period, unless it is more economical to purchase a permit or pass for a longer duration. For example, a yearly parking pass may be more affordable than 10 monthly passes.

Temporary Accommodations

22. If the person is participating in a training program that does not allow for daily commuting from the place of residence, the following costs may be paid:
    a. the cost of temporary accommodations; and
    b. the cost of one return trip per year for the purpose of relocating to a temporary accommodation.

For the purposes of this section a “year” is considered a period of 12 consecutive months.

23. When determining whether a distance “does not allow for daily commuting”, questions to consider include, but are not limited to the following:
    a. Does the participant’s health problem limit their capacity to commute?
    b. What are the hours of the training program?
    c. What is the duration of the commute?
    d. What is the duration of the training program?
24. The cost approved for temporary accommodations should be typical of the cost of a small apartment in the area in which the training is taking place. Where accommodation is also required for the participant’s dependant(s), larger accommodations may be appropriate.
25. In all cases, cost effectiveness should be considered. For example, a 200 km daily round trip commute in a private vehicle could cost $600 per month in mileage alone based on a five day per week program and $0.15 per km. Accommodation situated closer to the training facility could remove or diminish costs for private transportation and/or parking.
26. Normally the cost of temporary accommodations should only be paid during a training period, but may be extended to the duration of the training program, if reasonable given the circumstances. For example, a

one-month break between training periods may not warrant a change in accommodation.

Other Expenses to Meet Training Goals

27. Other expenses may be paid that are required to enable a person to meet training needs to achieve an occupational goal identified in their VTP.
28. Other expenses approved under this section will require a strong rationale demonstrating the need for the expense and describing how not approving the expense would impede the participant's successful achievement of the occupational goal. For example, an instructor may suggest to a Veteran who has been exempted from certain course pre-requisites due to their practical military experience that the books be obtained from these courses to support their knowledge of theory. Without these additional books, the Veteran would be at risk of falling behind in the program.

Maximum Allowable

29. As per subsection 15(3) of *VWR*, the maximum amount that may be paid in any VTP for the training expenses set out in paragraphs 12 to 28 above is $75,800.
30. The maximum amount is not intended to be a target when approving expenses in an VTP. VTPs are developed in accordance with the principles and factors prescribed in the *VWR* and described in paragraphs 8 and 9 of this policy. VTPs must list the individual training expenses and associated expenditures for each item. Total expenses approved for most VTPs are not expected to reach the maximum amount.

Exceeding the Maximum Amount

31. The maximum amount, as set out in paragraph 29 above, may be exceeded where such higher amounts are required to enable a person to meet training needs to achieve an occupational goal in an VTP, as per subsection 15(3) of the *Veterans Well-being Regulations*.
32. Exceeding the maximum amount should only occur in very exceptional circumstances. A strong rationale demonstrating the need to exceed the amount and describing how not exceeding the amount would impede the participant's successful achievement of the occupational goal is required.
33. The rationale or reasons for decision must also identify how the applicable principles and factors in paragraphs 8 and 9 were considered to reach the decision to exceed. For example, the rationale should explain why a more cost-effective approach was not considered appropriate for the person for whom the VTP was developed.
34. In the event that a participant requests the maximum be exceeded, the principles and factors should be applied in making a decision to approve or deny the request.

Additional Dependant Care

35. In addition to the expenses listed above, VAC may pay 50% of the cost of additional dependant care to a maximum of $750 per month while a person is participating in training, where:
    a. the person is normally responsible for providing care to a dependant, which includes a minor child, disabled adult or elderly person;
    b. the cost is additional to the cost of any paid care that is already in place for the dependant. For example, where prior to training the person was paying for a half-day child care program and as a result of participating in training now requires a full-day program, 50% of the added cost of changing to a full-day program would be eligible for reimbursement;

c. the care is essential to ensure the personal safety or health of the dependant or to maintain their activities of daily living;
d. the substitute care is required during the time that the person is participating in a training activity; and
e. the person has responsibility for arranging for paid temporary substitute care.

36. Care may be provided by friends, relatives or a professional provider as the circumstances require

Exceeding the Additional Dependant Care Amounts

37. As per subsection 15(4) of the *Veterans Well-being Regulations*, VAC may exceed the percentage (50%) and the maximum amount ($750) for additional dependant care where necessary if:
    a. there are more than three dependants requiring care;
    b. the location or availability of care may require a higher percentage or amount. For example, a person may be participating in a job placement involving shift work, which limits the availability of care and increases the costs;
    c. the higher percentage or amount is necessary in order for the person to meet an occupational goal respecting training as approved in an VTP. For example, the participant may have a dependant with a health problem or condition who requires specialized and hence more costly care.
38. Paragraphs 38 b) and 38 c) above should only be applied in situations which are out of the ordinary. A strong rationale is required demonstrating the need for exceeding the percentage or maximum amount and describing how not exceeding the percentage or maximum amount would impede the participant's successful achievement of the occupational goal. The rationale or reasons for decision should also identify how the applicable principles and factors (see paragraphs 8 and 9 of this policy) were considered in making the decision.
39. In the event that a participant requests the additional dependent care rates or amounts be exceeded, the principles and factors should be applied in making the decision to approve or deny the request.

Ownership of Goods Purchased

40. Any goods once purchased become the property and responsibility of the participant. VAC may refuse to pay for the cost of any expenses to replace lost, stolen or damaged goods.

Reimbursement Period for Expenses

41. A claim for reimbursement must be made in writing within one year after the day on which the expenditure is incurred and must include proof of the expenditure, as per section 16 of the *Veterans Well-being Regulations*. An expense is incurred when the service or product is received which creates an obligation to pay.
42. Expenses must be approved in the VTP. In some cases expenses might be incurred prior to approval of the VTP. These expenses may be payable if the participant was eligible for the Rehabilitation Program at the time the expense was incurred, the expense is later approved in the VTP, and the claim for reimbursement is submitted within one year of the date the expense was incurred.

Authorization Following Vocational Training Plan Completion

43. All eligible expenses related to the VTP must be authorized by the delegated decision maker. No revisions to the amounts approved in the VTP can be made following the completion or closure of the Rehabilitation Plan.

Written Decisions

44. All decisions concerning the approval or denial of payment of training related expenses must be provided to the participant in writing and must include the decision rationale with reference to the applicable principles and factors, as detailed in paragraphs 8 and 9 of this policy, and the participant's right to have the decision reviewed.

References

Veterans Well-being Act, sections 6 to 17

Veterans Well-being Regulations, sections 15 and 16

Rehabilitation Services and Vocational Assistance Plan: Assessments, Development and Implementation

Vocational Rehabilitation and Vocational Assistance – Training Expenses – Transition Policy

Appendix A of the Commuting Assistance Directive published by the National Joint Council of the Public Service Commission