

<b>MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION</b>    <b>PERSONNEL POLICY MANUAL</b>	<b>Chapter Title</b> Training and Professional Development		
	<b>Policy Title</b> Cooperative Educational Training Program		
	<b>Policy Number</b> 6500	<b>Page</b> 1 of 5	<b>Effective Date</b> April 1, 2009
Micki Knudsen, Human Resources Director Signature on File	<b>Supersedes Policy Number</b> 6500	<b>Page</b> 1 of 4	<b>Prior Effective Date</b> August 1, 2008

## **POLICY STATEMENT**

The Cooperative Educational Training (Co-op) program will provide the department an opportunity to develop and secure an additional source of personnel in professional positions who are prepared for immediate, productive assignments upon graduation. Additionally, the program provides an opportunity for both in-state and out-of-state college students to obtain job experience closely related to their field of study, as well as providing some degree of indirect financial assistance. Co-op students have the flexibility to select one of the two program options based on their particular scheduling needs. The objective of the Co-op program is to promote a sense of permanency toward the organization and to encourage the student to return to the department upon graduation.

## **DEFINITIONS**

**Co-op** – College students who are participating in the department’s Cooperative Education Training Program. Their work assignments may extend throughout their college career up to graduation. When employed, Co-ops are classified as permanent, part-time, hourly employees who earn benefits and whose salaries are paid by the Equal Opportunity and Diversity Division (EODD).

**Intern** – College students who are participating in the department’s Internship Program. These students are typically employed for the summer months or for a short time. They are wage employees, do not earn benefits, and are paid by the employing division.

**Alternating Option** – Co-op students will alternate between working full-time in the Co-op program for a semester and attending classes for a semester.

Consecutive Option – Co-op students can work four or more months consecutively.

**PROVISIONS/REQUIREMENTS**

1. Co-op students who select either option must have and maintain a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.0, completed at least 27 college credit hours, and must have declared a major in civil engineering, criminal justice, information systems, business administration, or related studies for which the department recruits.
2. Co-op students will not count against a district's/division's/office's target staffing level.
3. During the work phase, Co-op students will accrue benefits such as annual leave, sick leave, retirement, and group health insurance benefits if the position requires at least 1,040 hours of work during a 12-month period.
4. An initial probationary period of six working months is required for all Co-op students upon employment. If the student selects the alternating option (as described in "Definitions" above), the probationary period will be extended into the next semester until a total of six months have been worked. A discussion should be held with the student before the end of their probationary period, at which time a determination will be made as to whether the student should be retained as a Co-op by the department or terminated and removed from the Co-op program.
5. All supervisors must meet with their Co-ops at the beginning of the work phase to clarify performance expectations and duties. Throughout the work phase, the supervisor should evaluate performance based on defined performance expectations. All evaluation forms must be completed by the immediate supervisor and submitted to EODD.
6. Students must either be enrolled in college or employed with the department during all phases of the program. If a student is not enrolled in college full-time during the school phase or does not return to the department for their work phase, they will be released from the program unless the EODD Director has granted prior authorization to the student.
7. Students are expected to work 40 hours each week during the work phase; however, because of class schedules, there may be exceptions. Requests for exceptions and/or any overtime incurred by Co-op students must be made in advance and approved by the EODD Director.
8. Students may be eligible for tuition reimbursement after the completion of six months of full-time employment during the work phase; eligibility is subject to the provisions outlined in Personnel Policy 6504, "Educational Assistance." EODD

may reimburse Co-op students who meet the eligibility requirements and obtain approval from the EODD Director prior to beginning their coursework. Failure to obtain this approval prior to beginning coursework will result in denial of reimbursement from the EODD. Students may request approval to have their tuition reimbursed by their immediate supervisor's district/division/office. If approved, the district/division/office will be responsible for reimbursing the student's tuition. The decision to grant reimbursement will be based on the needs of the district/division/office and available budgetary funding.

9. Regardless of whether the approval is requested from the immediate supervisor or EODD Director, students will be required to sign a P-54, "Application for Educational Assistance and Repayment Agreement Form," which will require Co-op students to repay the department 100 percent of any tuition/education reimbursement received within the last 24 months from the effective date of any of the following reasons:
  - a. Student drops out or leaves school for any reason.
  - b. Student's failure to satisfy college/universities and/or department's Co-op program eligibility requirements.
  - c. Student's employment is voluntarily or involuntarily terminated from the department for any reason during any phase of the Co-op program. This does not apply to terminations that are "coded" as required under section #14 of this policy for SAM II processing when it is anticipated that the student will be returning to the department after completion of a school phase.
  - d. Student determines they no longer want to participate in Co-op program for any reason.
  - e. Student accepts full-time employment upon completion of Co-op program, but then voluntarily or involuntarily terminates employment.
  - f. Student declines a full-time job offer from the department once they have completed the Co-op program. (Subject to EODD Director approval that job position offered is appropriate for the student.)
10. The repayment amount must be reimbursed within thirty (30) days after the effective date of the reasons outlined above.
11. The student, upon being notified that he/she owes money to the department under this policy, will be allowed a review period of no more than two business days to contest any or all of the repayment expense amounts owed. The department will provide the student with documentation that supports the

repayment amounts owed by the student to the department under this policy. The student's review period of two business days will begin when the department provides the student with the documentation outlined herein. A student may elect to make a personal payment to the department to repay all or a portion of the repayment amount owed the department instead of having money withheld from his/her remaining paychecks and/or remaining annual or compensatory leave balances. However, if the student requests to pay by personal payment, the payment must be received by the end of the two-day review period. If the personal payment is not for the full repayment amount owed, then the remaining amount owed will be withheld from the student's remaining paychecks and/or remaining annual or compensatory leave balances. If the full repayment owed is still not recovered by means of salary withholding and/or remaining annual or compensatory leave balance withholding, the department may establish a payment plan with the student for the remaining amount owed. If a repayment plan is not entered into, or should a student fail to comply with the established terms and conditions of the payment plan, the department may elect to pursue any or all lawful means to collect this repayment owed the department.

12. Failure to sign the P-54, "Co-op Application for Educational Assistance and Repayment Agreement Form," after being requested to do, so will mean the student is not eligible to receive tuition assistance/reimbursement.
13. The Controller's Division will coordinate and handle the collection of employee repayment on behalf of the department.
14. Co-op students will be coded as terminated from employment within SAM II HR/Payroll System each time they leave the department to return to college for a school phase. No benefits will be accrued or earned after the last day worked. Students will be paid for any remaining compensatory time and annual leave in the SAM II HR/Payroll System. Insurance coverage will continue to be available without state participation. Students must make manual payments if they want to continue health, life, or disability insurance coverage.
15. Co-op students whose cumulative GPA falls below a 2.0 will be placed on probation and will be ineligible for tuition reimbursement or pay increases as outlined in Personnel Policy 2600, "Performance/Conduct Intervention." The EODD Director will make a determination on a case-by-case basis as to whether a student may return or continue to work for the department while on probation. Consideration will be given, but not limited, to feedback from the student's current supervisor, job performance, and the student's ability to fulfill their institution's academic requirements. Students who are placed on probation during either a school or work phase must raise their cumulative GPA to a minimum of 2.0 within six months of being placed on probation or be terminated from the department and the Co-op program.

16. Co-op students who exhibit behavior that warrants disciplinary action will meet with their immediate supervisor and the EODD Director. The supervisor and the EODD Director, in conjunction with the Human Resources Director, will determine the appropriate disciplinary action, which may include termination of employment and removal from the Co-op program. No student shall be terminated and removed from the Co-op program without the EODD Director's prior approval.
17. Reasons students may be placed on probation or removed from the program include, but are not limited to:
  - a. Not meeting performance expectations.
  - b. Violation of department policy.
  - c. An inability or unwillingness to perform assigned work.
  - d. Lack of interest in working for the department.
  - e. Inability to satisfy their college or university's academic requirements for graduation.
18. The goal of the Co-op Program is to place students into full-time positions upon graduation. However, the organization's needs, funding, and the student's performance will dictate whether a full-time position is offered upon graduation.
19. Please refer to the Co-op Program salary schedule for salary guidance.

**CROSS REFERENCES:**

[Personnel Policy 0600, "Examinations and Physicals"](#)  
[Personnel Policy 2600, "Performance/Conduct Intervention"](#)  
[Personnel Policy 6504, "Educational Assistance"](#)  
[Co-op Program Salary Schedule](#)

**FORMS:**

[P-54, "Co-op Application for Educational Assistance and Repayment Agreement Form"](#)