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DMH**

LOS ANGELES COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH  
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February 23, 2016

The Honorable Board of Supervisors  
County of Los Angeles  
383 Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration  
500 West Temple Street  
Los Angeles, California 90012

Dear Supervisors:

**APPROVAL TO AMEND TITLE 5 PERSONNEL COUNTY CODE ORDINANCE SECTION 5.52  
TUITION REIMBURSEMENT PROGRAM AND AUTHORIZE THE DEPARTMENT TO EXCEED  
THE ESTABLISHED SPENDING LIMIT ON SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMS FOR FISCAL YEARS  
2015-16 THROUGH 2017-18  
(ALL SUPERVISORIAL DISTRICTS)  
(3 VOTES)**

**SUBJECT**

Request approval to amend Title 5 Personnel Section 5.52 Tuition Reimbursement Program of the Los Angeles County Code Section 5.52.110 Maximum Reimbursable Training to include language exempting the limitations on reimbursement under specific conditions and authorize the Department of Mental Health to exceed the established spending limit of an annual aggregate of \$100,000 on scholarship programs to implement the Financial Incentive Program for Fiscal Years 2015-16 through 2017-18.

**IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE BOARD AFTER THE PUBLIC HEARING,**

1. Approve the ordinance (Attachment) to amend Title 5 Personnel Section 5.52 Tuition Reimbursement Program of the Los Angeles County Code by adding new language to Section 5.52.110, Maximum Reimbursable Training. The ordinance will allow employees who have taken coursework in the field of mental health to exceed the maximum limitation of two courses for tuition reimbursement provided that they meet the written eligibility criteria established by the Acting Director of the Department of Mental Health (DMH).
2. Introduce, waive reading, and adopt the Ordinance.

3. Delegate authority to the DMH to exceed the current Board-approved maximum annual aggregate limitation of \$100,000 for student loan repayment or other scholarship programs involving DMH personnel.

**PURPOSE/JUSTIFICATION OF RECOMMENDED ACTION**

The current Los Angeles County Code Section 5.52.110 restricts tuition reimbursement for County officers or employees to a maximum of two courses which total no more than eight units of credit per semester or quarter. Board approval of the first and second recommendations will amend the County Code to allow employees who have taken coursework in the field of mental health to exceed the maximum limitation of two courses for tuition reimbursement provided that they meet the written eligibility criteria established by the Acting Director.

On March 19, 2013, your Board approved an ordinance amending Title 5 – Personnel Section of the County Code, Chapter 44, Additional Employment and Compensation, by adding Subsection C to Section 5.44.020, to confirm that a County officer or employee may participate in student loan repayment or scholarship programs where the programs require the employment at an eligible site or entity as a condition of receiving benefits under such a program. In concert with the ordinance, the Directors of DMH, Department of Health Services, and Department of Public Health obtained your Board’s approval to execute all required applications and agreements for student loan repayment programs which do not require County contribution or which require County contributions of less than \$100,000 in aggregate annually for each department.

The third recommendation will allow DMH to exceed the annual limitation of \$100,000 for such financial incentive or scholarship programs. The DMH will implement the Financial Incentive Program, which will provide tuition reimbursement and loan assistance to the public mental health workforce, as well as authority to implement the Under Represented Ethnic Populations (UREP) Graduate Recruitment Program. The UREP Graduate Recruitment Program is a Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) funded effort to increase retention and advancement of qualified linguistically and culturally responsive individuals critical to meeting the public mental health needs with the goal of increasing access to mental health care in unserved/underserved communities. Participants of the UREP Graduate Recruitment Program will not be County employees.

**Implementation of Strategic Plan Goals**

The recommended actions are consistent with the County’s Strategic Plan Goal 3, Integrated Services Delivery.

**FISCAL IMPACT/FINANCING**

The current budgeted appropriation allocated for the Department’s Financial Incentive Program is \$8,156,604 for Fiscal Years 2015-16 to 2017-18, fully funded by State MHSA revenue for Workforce Education and Training (WET).

There is no net County cost impact associated with the recommendations.

## **FACTS AND PROVISIONS/LEGAL REQUIREMENTS**

In accordance with the MHSA, the County of Los Angeles submitted its WET plan to the State Department of Mental Health on October 15, 2008, and it was approved on April 8, 2009. The MHSA WET Plan serves to support the development of a qualified and competent workforce in the Public Mental Health System (PMHS), which consists of the DMH and its contracted mental health agencies. It included 22 action plans that were developed to address the PMHS's needs and areas of concern identified as a result of an exhaustive public mental health workforce survey. The Financial Incentive Program includes consolidated Action Plan #19, Tuition Reimbursement, and Action Plan #22, Loan Assumption. Many barriers exist for those desiring advancement in the mental health field, and this Financial Incentive Program is dedicated to address the occupational shortages of mental health professionals and paraprofessionals who work in hard-to-fill/retain, direct service positions with unserved/underserved communities.

The Financial Incentive Program authorizes the repayment of tuition and educational loans to certain types of mental health professionals, who in turn must commit to a service obligation in a hard-to-fill/retain position for one or two years in the PMHS. On July 15, 2014, your Board approved DMH's Three-Year Program and Expenditure Plan that included a summary of the proposed Financial Incentive Program.

The UREP Graduate Recruitment Program is projected to provide incentives for individuals committed to working in the PMHS to pursue educational goals that result in career advancement in areas of high need with the goal of increasing access to mental health care in unserved/underserved communities. This Program is a three-year program intended to recruit five individuals representing significantly UREP, whom are committed to employment serving the most unserved/underserved populations. The UREP Graduate Recruitment Program will include a one year paid work experience stipend, followed by funding of a two year for either a Master of Social Work or a Master in Marriage and Family Therapy. All awardees will be selected by an independent committee of Departmental, Departmental Contractor and peer specialist personnel, tasked with reviewing and scoring application packages. The payback service obligation and payment will be overseen by the Department's WET Division and the length of commitment to the PMHS will be contingent on the award time and amount.

The public hearing notice requirements of Government Code Section 6062a have been satisfied, and the public hearing requirements of Government Code Section 66018 will be satisfied by this action.

County Counsel has approved the Attachment as to form.

## **CONTRACTING PROCESS**

Not applicable.

## **IMPACT ON CURRENT SERVICES (OR PROJECTS)**

The Financial Incentive Program is one component of a recruitment and retention strategy to augment the public mental health workforce available to qualified DMH employees. Recruitment and

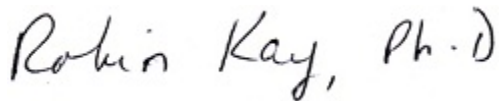
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retention of highly qualified health professionals that speak one of the County's 13 threshold languages and/or represent unserved/underserved communities remain a challenge for the Department. Delegation of greater spending authority will enhance the value of this component and will support the Department's efforts to retain such professionals and to enhance timely delivery of consumer-centered mental health care.

Respectfully submitted,

Handwritten signature of Robin Kay, Ph.D.

ROBIN KAY, Ph.D.

Acting Director of Mental Health

RK:DM:AB:ADA:do

Enclosures

c: Executive Office, Board of Supervisors  
Chief Executive Office  
County Counsel  
Chairperson, Mental Health Commission

**ORDINANCE NO. \_\_\_\_\_**

An ordinance amending Title 5 - Personnel of the Los Angeles County Code, relating to tuition reimbursable training.

The Board of Supervisors of the County of Los Angeles ordains as follows:

**SECTION 1.** Section 5.52.110 is hereby amended to read as follows:

**5.52.110 Maximum Reimbursable Training.**

An employee is eligible for reimbursement for a maximum of two courses which together total no more than eight units of credit, per semester or quarter. This limitation shall not apply to Department of Mental Health employees taking coursework in the field of mental health on condition that the employees meet written eligibility criteria established by the department head and incorporated into the plans required pursuant to section 5.52.130 of this chapter.

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