

NEBRASKA'S EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION ENDOWMENT POLICY

TITLE: Grant Funds Use for Bilingual Family Engagement (home-based programs) Staff Tuition Reimbursements

POLICY: This policy reflects the Board of Trustees approval process for using Sixpence grant funds to reimburse the post-secondary tuition of Bilingual Home Visitors engaged in an education plan to meet the qualifications of a Home Visiting Specialist. This policy has been developed to address the shortage of qualified Bilingual Home Visitors, and is pursuant to the Family Engagement (home-based programs) Staff Qualification Quality Indicator for Bilingual Home Visitors. Under this indicator, “programs may employ a Bilingual Home Visitor with an Associates degree, or the equivalency in credit hours, with a detailed education plan, created in conjunction with a higher education institute, to meet the Home Visiting Specialist qualifications within four years of hire. The Bilingual Home Visitor must still be supervised by a Home Visiting Specialist.”ⁱ

Guidelines:

In order to be reimbursable with Sixpence grant funds, tuition reimbursements made by school districts to Bilingual Home Visitors for post-secondary education need to be 1) reasonable and necessary, 2) allocable, and 3) legal. In order to establish “necessity,” a district needs to demonstrate that the tuition reimbursements will benefit the program, not just the Home Visitor, to a degree commensurate with the amount of the reimbursement. Only courses that result in a Bachelor’s degree in compliance with the requirements for a Home Visiting Specialist in Subsections 006.05A through 006.05A5 in Nebraska Department of Education Rule 11 (92 NAC 11) and in the Indicators for Staff Qualifications in the Sixpence Quality Criteria for Family Engagement Programs¹ are appropriate for these funds.

In addition, the course program must include at least 12 credit hours specific to infants/toddlers and family engagement. Whenever possible, the First Connections Online training and Home Visiting Core Practices and Principle Online training should be taken for course credit. Additionally, all courses must be pre-approved by the district, and reimbursement shall be made upon successful completion of the course. Districts shall adopt or create policies/procedures/agreements with the Bilingual Home Visitor outlining expectations and limitations for minimum grades, attendance, course withdrawal or employment ending, use of work time for higher education purposes, and reimbursement procedures.

Documentation:

The district needs documentation in connection with the above factors to support its use of grant funds for this purpose. Such documentation shall include, at a minimum, the following:

1. Written justification of the necessity of employing a Bilingual Home Visitor in order to carry out the grant program;
2. Written explanation of the need to reimburse the Home Visitor's tuition (in part or in whole) in order to carry out the grant program, after the Home Visitor's documented attempts to utilize of all other sources of funds, such as Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and/or a Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education (TEACH) Grant, if applicable.
3. Written documentation that the Bilingual Home Visitor was approved by the district in advance for tuition reimbursements, was employed in the District's grant program for the duration of the course, and completed the course satisfactorily; and
4. Written documentation that the cost of the course was reasonable.

Total funds to be used for this purpose may not exceed \$4,000 per Bilingual Home Visitor, per year, nor may exceed 5% of the total grant award. Grant funds may not be used for any other costs associated with post-secondary education, such as books, fees and travel.

EFFECTIVE DATE: March 9, 2016

ⁱ Sixpence Early Learning Fund Attachment B, Quality Criteria for Family Engagement Programs, July 2015.