

# Tip of the Hat from CAP School Days

We are into the fall semester of colleges and universities across Oklahoma, and many Department of Rehabilitation job seekers have concerns about their tuition, books and fees. DRS can pay for higher education if that education is necessary to achieve an Employment Outcome which you have chosen.

If you have not received a check for tuition, books and fees by now there may be a reason for this. Your counselor needs written information from you before they do an authorization which will generate your check.

Your counselor needs information about your enrollment in writing as well as the cost of your classes. They will also need documentation of the cost of your books. Take your books to the cashier and ask the cashier to ring up the book costs on a statement which you can provide to your counselor.

These things then provide written justification for the money which will be spent on your case. This documentation covers the expenditure of funds when the agency is audited. The agency must answer to its federal overseers that it is spending money wisely and specifically to prepare a client for employment.

When your DRS counselor has done a written authorization, this will tell State Office that it is time to send a check to you to cover specific expenses. Sometimes your counselor will not complete an authorization immediately after getting information about your enrollment, tuition, books and fees. Sometimes the counselor will ask the tech who works for them to do the authorization, and that can add some time to the process.

After the authorization for your tuition, books and fees has been done it typically takes 7-10 working days for you to get a check. If it has been much longer than this, you may contact your counselor and/or that counselor's tech to find out if and when the authorization was done.

You should receive a check in a timely manner. It is then your responsibility to pay the costs of your education. If DRS is listed as a responsible party for your education on your Individual Plan for Employment, they will generally ask that you apply for a Pell Grant before they pay.

If you are not eligible for a Pell Grant, you should still apply and receive a denial in writing which then alerts DRS that they need to pick up the bill. If Pell covers all your expenses, DRS will not pay anything that semester. DRS will begin paying the cost of your education after your Pell Grant has been exhausted.

If someone is trying to get you to take out a student loan to pay for education which DRS has agreed to do on your Individual Plan for Employment, talk to your counselor before you do anything. The agency may ask you to apply for a grant to pay for your education, but they may not ask you to take out a loan to pay for something they have agreed to do in writing.

Let's talk about grades. Grades are important because they measure your success in the education process. Agency policy indicates that you must maintain a 2.0 grade point average in a 4.0 scale for them to finance education.

If you fall below 2.0 in any given semester, DRS will not pay for your education the following semester. They will resume payment when you bring your grade point average up to 2.0. Lower grades will cost you money. Remember to provide your grades to your counselor as soon as you receive them. Your counselor must have your previous semester's grades before they authorize the next semester.

Payment for tuition, books and fees for education is a process. A lot of things have to happen correctly for this process to go smoothly. Yes, there are many things you must do, but sometimes the counselor may not have done something in a reasonable time. CAP is an advocacy program which serves job seekers from the Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation.

If you have questions or concerns, call 405-521-3756 #7. I'll be happy to talk with you about your concerns. With a release of information from you, I may contact your DRS counselor to make further inquiries. It is important that you receive the supports you need in order to get the employment you want.



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**"Lower grades will cost you money."**