

ISSUED DATE: September 15, 2025

TO:  Children's Division  Contracted Staff

FROM: Sara Smith, Children's Division Director

SUBJECT: PART-TIME UNDERGRADUATE TUITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The Children's Division remains steadfast in our commitment to support the professional growth of our workforce. I am enthusiastic to announce we have opened the application process for the Undergraduate Tuition Assistance Program starting the Fall 2025 semester. This is an incredible opportunity for individuals interested in furthering their education, field skills, and leadership skills.

The Undergraduate Tuition Assistance Program does not come without challenges. Program recipients must have the skill to balance their full-time job, family duties, and part-time undergraduate school. Divisional leadership understands the challenges associated with this undertaking and we are committed to providing flexibility to selected staff including providing three (3) hours per week partial reduction of work activity to be used for travel to class, attendance, study time and/or other activity associated with coursework if essential work functions are not hindered.

The part-time Undergraduate Tuition Assistance Program is funded under Governor Kehoe's approved FY2026 budget.

### **Program Highlights:**

- Employee must attend an approved, accredited public university within the state of Missouri. Employee must declare a major and that major must be within the approved fields of study (social work, justice systems, psychology, sociology, human services, child advocacy studies). Employee must work with the Department and the University to finalize the approval.
  - Potentially approved schools include University of Missouri, Columbia; University of Central Missouri; Harris Stowe University; Truman State University; Missouri State University; Lincoln University; Southeast Missouri State University; Missouri Western; University of Missouri – St. Louis; University of Missouri - Kansas City; and Missouri Southern State.
  - If the Employee changes their major, they MUST obtain approval from the Title IV-E Liaison and their major MUST be an approved field of study. If it is not, the Employee will be placed in repayment status.

- Please contact Christine Steele (Title IV-E Liaison) with questions regarding potentially approved programs. There are Universities that cater to non-traditional students including a new BSW program through University of Missouri, Columbia that is accepting qualified, non-traditional students that hold an associate's degree.
- Internal applicants with an associate's degree and/or 60 hours of college credit that are accepted by their chosen and applicable university and degree of study will be given preference.
- Allocations for tuition assistance are based upon available funding.
- Not all applicants that apply will be chosen to receive tuition assistance.
- Applicants meeting eligibility criteria for interview will complete a formal interview.
- Employees shall be employed full-time in a Qualified Field Position with the Department's Children's Division for a period of one year after graduation or disenrollment from college for each academic year that the Children's Division sponsors Employee's education. An academic year shall be defined as Fall semester of year 1 through the end of Summer semester of year 2. For example, from Fall semester of 2025 through the end of Summer semester of 2026. For employment repayment purposes, attendance of one, two, or three semesters of the academic year requires one full year of employment service. The Department will direct bill the Employee's tuition, course related fees, books, and other course related expenses as approved by the Department up to \$4,400 per semester to cover six to nine credit hours of enrollment per semester directly to the University.
  - The University and the Department MUST have an agreement for payment of services prior to final negotiation of the Employee's tuition assistance contract with the Department.
  - Employees need to be enrolled in at least six credit hours per semester. The Department will reimburse up to nine credit hours per semester. Fees and books for courses taken beyond nine credit hours are the responsibility of the Employee to pay.
  - All lodging, travel, meals, and other expenses associated with the Employee's course of study through their approved accredited university program are the sole responsibility of the Employee and shall NOT be reimbursed by the Department.
  - All courses beyond the required for the degree, enrolled during unapproved terms, or any courses failed that need to be re-taken will not be reimbursed by the Department.
- The Employee understands that they MUST maintain a GPA of 3.0 or above each semester.
  - Employee will negotiate consents for release of information to the Department so that the Department may review grades and account information to make the appropriate payments.
  - Employee will submit their final grades each semester to the Title IV-E Liaison.
- All Employees who contract with the Department will be required to be employed full-time with the Children's Division after graduation (also known as the service or repayment portion of the contract) in case management/field positions/approved field supervisory positions within the Children's Division only. (Examples: Associate/Social Services Specialist I, II, III, IV; Supervisor; Specialist; Circuit Manager).
- Employees will be granted up to **SIX MONTHS** after graduation to be hired in an approved position within the Division. If qualifying employment is not obtained within that time, the Department will request repayment of expenses.
  - Employees will be required to apply for qualifying field positions per current hiring policies.
  - ***The Division cannot guarantee a specific county for employment. The Employee, in submitting their application, fully understands that they may need to re-locate to meet the requirements of their contract.***

- The Department will provide the Employee three hours per week partial reduction of work activity to be used for travel to the University, attendance in classes, study time and/or other activity associated with the coursework. This is subject to conditions based on essential performance responsibilities.
- Selected Employees will remain employed full-time while attending classes.

**Application Process:**

1. Complete the application attached to this memo including the following:
  - Current resume
  - Three letters of reference including at least one within the employee's current chain of command.
  - Signed release of Information for the Department of Social Services and University to verify acceptance.
2. Return the CD application by **October 10, 2025**, to [Christine.E.Steele@dss.mo.gov](mailto:Christine.E.Steele@dss.mo.gov)
3. Upon acceptance of admission by the University and recommendations requested levels of supervision, the Children's Division Central Office representatives will conduct interviews.
4. Upon completion of the interview, the interview team will make recommendations for final approval to the Children's Division Director, and applicants will be notified of their status.
5. Staff accepted into the program will be required to sign an agreement/contract with the Department which outlines the benefits and conditions.
6. Staff will be expected to maintain employment with the Children's Division post-graduation, or will be expected to pay the calculated, prorated cost of their education, in full, at the time of departure.

For more information, please contact Christine Steele: [Christine.E.Steele@dss.mo.gov](mailto:Christine.E.Steele@dss.mo.gov)

SS:CES



# Missouri Department of Social Services, Children's Division

## Undergraduate Tuition Assistance Application

### Application information

Full name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Last First M.I.

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Street address Apt/Unit #

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

City State Zip Code

### Education

College: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_

From: \_\_\_\_\_ To: \_\_\_\_\_ Did you graduate? Yes  No  Degree: \_\_\_\_\_

Other: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_

From: \_\_\_\_\_ To: \_\_\_\_\_ Did you graduate? Yes  No  Degree: \_\_\_\_\_

**\*\*\*College Transcripts must be attached to application.**

**Employment Information (Within Children’s Division)**

Current Position: \_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Start Date: \_\_\_\_\_

As a part of this application process, we are REQUIRED to contact your current supervisor and leadership within your chain of command for a reference. Do you agree to this condition? Yes  No

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**\*\*\*Three letters of reference with at least ONE reference from your current chain of command must be attached to application.**

**Proposed Undergraduate Plan**

Public University Accepted To: \_\_\_\_\_ Start Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Proposed Graduation Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Major (MUST meet program requirements): \_\_\_\_\_

Will you attend Fall Semester? Yes  No

Will you attend Spring Semester? Yes  No

Will you attend Summer Semester? Yes  No

**Application Questions (Please attach your answers to this application)**

1. Briefly describe your interest in pursuing a bachelor’s degree.
2. Explain your vision on utilization of your bachelor’s degree to improve your work with children and families served by the Division.
3. If accepted into the tuition assistance program, what do you believe will be the most challenging aspect for you?

**Applicant Signature**

**READ VERY CAREFULLY BEFORE SIGNING** I certify that information given by me is true and complete to the best of my knowledge and belief. I understand that should an investigation at any time disclose any such misrepresentation, falsification, or concealment as to a material fact, it will be sufficient grounds for rejection of my application and/or removal from employment. I authorize the Department of Social Services (DSS) to investigate, obtain and compile information concerning my employment history; to obtain a copy of my college transcript(s); and to conduct a pre-employment background check and annual record review of myself, including information pertaining to any report of child or adult abuse or neglect revealed by an examination of government abuse/neglect records and/ or information related to any arrests or convictions for criminal acts and other checks as listed above or deemed appropriate. I release DSS from any legal liability that may result from these investigations. I waive all provisions of law forbidding colleges or universities which I attended, law enforcement agencies or past employers, from disclosing any information which they acquired relative to my employment. I consent that via a copy of this application form, they may disclose such information to DSS. I understand that any offer for tuition assistance is conditional upon results of reference, background checks and upon final negotiation of a contract with the Division and Department of Social Services. I hereby waive any rights to review any information obtained by DSS as a result of background checks.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Determination (To be completed Employee’s leadership):**

Has Employee been subject to a disciplinary procedure within the last 12 months? (This does not include EIR) Yes  No

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Immediate Supervisor Signature** **Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Secondary Level Supervisor Signature** **Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**\*Regional Director/Other Designee Signature** **Date**

***\*Regional Director signature is required if applicable. Otherwise, three levels of supervision are required unless approval otherwise given by your Title IV-E Liaison (Christine Steele).***

**Submit application and required documentation in ONE email.**

- Application**
- Transcripts**
- Three letters of reference**
- Acceptance to University**
- Chain of Command Signatures**
  - **Supervisor**
  - **Circuit Manager**
  - **Field Support Manager**
  - **Regional Director**

*Application is to be submitted to: [Christine.E.Steele@dss.mo.gov](mailto:Christine.E.Steele@dss.mo.gov)*