

ARTICLE 24

Training

Section 1

The Parties agree that the training and development of employees is a matter of significant importance to fulfilling the mission the Agency. Although the Agency agrees to make available to all employees, subject to budgetary considerations, the training necessary for the performance of the employee's presently assigned duties or proposed assignment, the employee has the right to raise as a defense in any termination proceeding and in any performance appraisal or disciplinary matter the lack of appropriate training.

Section 2

The Agency will ensure that all employees are trained for efficient accomplishment of their assigned duties, and, if requested by the employee, will discuss personal career development opportunities and goals.

Section 3

Employees are encouraged to take advantage of training and educational opportunities that could enhance their efficiency on the job and provide skills needed for advancement. An employee who has obtained prior approval from the Agency shall be reimbursed for all authorized expenses to the extent that such training is related to the employee's official duties which the employee could reasonably be expected to perform in the foreseeable future, and is consistent with the needs and mission of the Agency.

Section 4

The nomination and selection of employees to participate in training and career development programs and courses shall be made consistent with the principles of equal employment opportunity. The Agency will furnish pertinent information to employees concerning opportunities for individual development. Counseling in individual cases will be furnished consistent with the resources of the Agency.

Section 5

Requests for a variance in regular working hours and/or appropriate leave for educational purposes will be given consideration and recommended for approval whenever practical if such variance does not interfere with the needs and the mission accomplishment of the Agency.

Section 6 (Effective November 6, 2022)
Law License Fee Reimbursement

- A. To the extent the Agency or OPM requires a law license in order to be employed as a bargaining unit GS-0905 series attorney, the Agency will reimburse law license fees for one (1) State bar. If the employee is licensed in more than one (1) State, the Agency will reimburse the law license fee for the State with the lowest law license fee amount.
- B. Each year, employees may submit law license reimbursement requests on a rolling basis as the employee pays dues for the employee's professional law licenses. Reimbursement may be delayed until enactment of a full year appropriation. Reimbursement will begin in fiscal year (FY) 2024.
- C. To be eligible for law license fee reimbursement, the requestor must be a bargaining unit GS-0905 attorney at the beginning of the period covered by the law license and on the date requesting reimbursement. The employee must remain employed with SSA for the duration of the licensing period for which the employee received reimbursement or may be subject to the recovery of funds, at a pro-rated amount.
- D. All GS-0905 attorneys seeking reimbursement for a bar law license must annually provide documentation that they maintain active legal licensure in one (1) or more U.S. jurisdictions. Reimbursement will be made upon receipt of proof of payment and consistent with other legal and fiscal requirements.
- E. Qualified bargaining unit GS-0905 attorneys are eligible for reimbursement of up to \$300.00 of their individual annual law license fees each year. Law license fees paid on a bi-annual or tri-annual basis shall be reimbursed up to \$600.00 or \$900.00, respectively.

Section 7 (Effective November 6, 2022)
Continuing Legal Education Requirements

- A. The Agency shall reimburse tuition up to \$200.00 per fiscal year to a GS-0905 attorney for course(s) necessary to satisfy the employees' mandatory continuing legal education requirements to maintain a law license. The employee shall submit proof of payment to the Agency for reimbursement. Reimbursement may be delayed until enactment of a full year appropriation. Reimbursement will begin in FY 2024.
- B. In situations where an employee has an active membership in more than one bar (state, territory or District of Columbia), they may receive reimbursement sufficient to obtain the number of CLE hours necessary to maintain an active membership in the bar with the lesser CLE requirement.